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ABSTRACT

Phase one of the Effective College Library research project, conducted between July 1995 and March 1996, entailed a review of evidence about library support for teaching and learning in further education. The results are detailed in this report. Questionnaires focusing on innovative practices were distributed to all 453 Further Education (FE) colleges in England and selected colleges in Scotland and Wales; only English responses were analyzed for the report. The second major source of data was a series of interviews with staff at selected colleges. Five models of the library in support of teaching and learning are discussed here. The following sections comprise the report: The Context of Effectiveness; The FE College Library and the College; Survival in the Changing College; Towards Effectiveness; and Some Issues and Proposals. Appendices include the questionnaire, the case study and source colleges, interview question areas, and participants at the Effective College Library seminars. A list of acronyms used in the report is also included. (Contains 31 references.) (AEF)

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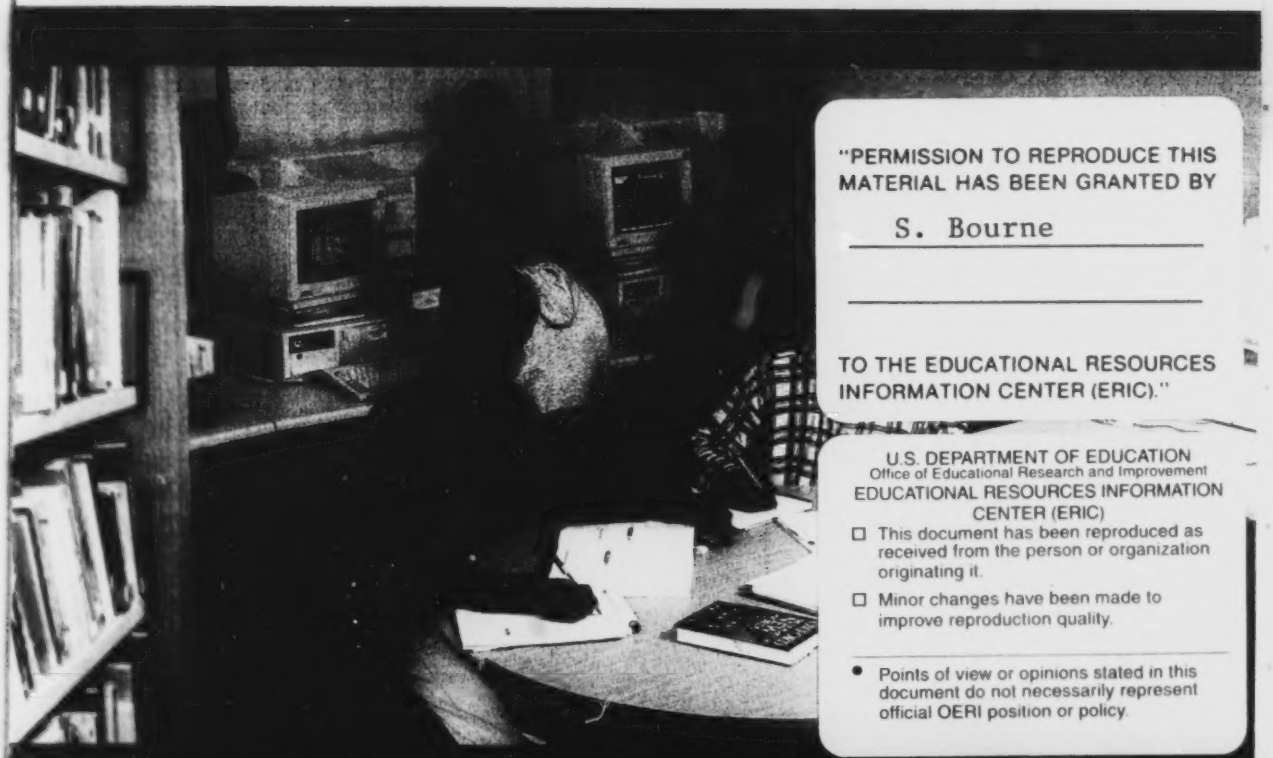
The effective college library

David Streatfield and Sharon Markless



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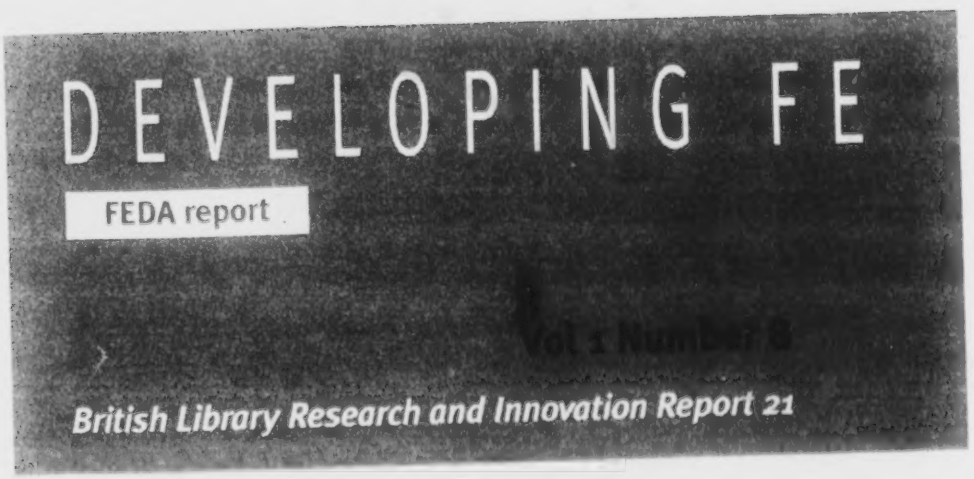

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Preface

The effective college library project

Libraries are better at stretching the imagination than is ticking boxes.
– Head of Department

This systematic assessment of the contribution made by college libraries and learning resource centres to teaching and learning is published at a critical time. After a few years of increased funding and resourcing, colleges and their libraries are struggling with retrenchment. Faced with the problems of juggling student numbers and decreased taught hours, many college managers are reviewing their learning support options. Their decisions about future provision of learning centres may lead to a revolution in library provision – or to a world without college libraries.

This report looks at a period of major change for colleges and their libraries, during which:

- Many libarians are shifting from traditional areas of support for students to collaboration with teachers over planning, delivery and evaluation of assignments.
- Librarians are getting more involved in college curriculum management, but most are not able to influence resourcing of new courses.

- The introduction of IT into the library and elsewhere is having a significant impact, especially if a limited (and problematic) version of resourced-based learning has been adopted.
- Library success in support for teaching and learning comes down to good staff, effective use of resources, good liaison with teaching staff, effective work with students, and IT training for staff and students.
- Many colleges are now re-assessing how they support teaching and learning – their decisions will be crucial to the future of college libraries.

Five models of the library in support of teaching and learning are dissected here. Some hard questions are asked about the need for libraries, whether librarians should get involved with the curriculum, and whether the new approaches to resource-based learning can be made to work.

About the project

Phase one of the Effective College Library research project, funded by the British Library Research and Development Department and FEDA, entailed a review of evidence about library support for teaching and learning in further education. The results are detailed in this report. The project aimed to:

- identify the main elements of library contribution to learning and development of further education students and staff
- describe different models of library provision in this context
- review similarities and differences in approach among FE colleges, sixth form colleges and tertiary colleges
- propose initiatives to enhance the library's contribution.

This work was conducted between July 1995 and March 1996.

Methodology

The project's approach combined the research experience of Sharon Markless (the Research Consultant) and David Streatfield (the Project Advisor) with the practical knowledge of current FE librarians: Margaret Chapman (Librarian, Huddersfield Technical College), Judy Atkinson (then Learning Resources Manager, Hackney Community College), Sylvia Plews (Centre Librarian, Sheffield College Parkwood Centre) and Trish Powell (Librarian, Richard Huish Sixth Form College and Hon. Secretary of COLRIC). A representative of COFHE (Kate Gardner, Library and LRC Manager, Worcester College of Technology) participated in the initial project planning meeting in August 1995.

The British Library Research and Innovation Centre and the Further Education Development Agency jointly funded the project and staff from both organisations supported the project at all stages.

An initial literature review by the team, with the Hackney Community College contribution by Brenda Osakwe, covered some of the main areas in which college libraries have an impact on supporting teaching and learning:

- convergence of libraries and other central services
- open learning
- out-reach services to part-time students
- critical thinking and information skills
- library-based educational uses of information technology
- service evaluation and performance indicators
- staffing and management issues.

Publications on the particular concerns of sixth form colleges in the new environment were also reviewed.

Questionnaire survey

Questionnaires were developed on library involvement in supporting teaching and learning in further education, focusing on innovative practice identified by team members. A conscious effort was made to avoid questions posed in the survey of User Education conducted in 1995 by Margaret Chapman.[1] A draft of the questionnaire was tested at the NATFHE Library Section Conference in November 1995, in a seminar at which eleven librarians gave detailed feedback. It was clear that a full-scale national survey was needed to give a full picture of current practice.

Questionnaires were distributed in December 1995 to all 453 FE colleges in England listed in the Further Education Funding Council database and selected colleges in Scotland and Wales. Only the English responses were analysed for the report. The response rate was 36% (165 usable responses from colleges in England), including nearly all of the college libraries previously identified by our team to be of particular interest. A few colleges listed separately by the FEFC gave combined responses; a few others, formerly separate colleges, responded separately from more than one site. Although we cannot draw firm conclusions about colleges that did not respond, the survey provides useful information about a substantial number of colleges and their libraries.

Visits to colleges

The second major source of data was a series of interviews with staff at selected colleges. Ten libraries were visited during February and March 1996, and 59 interviews conducted with: 24 librarians, 4 other learning resources staff, 22 teachers and 9 senior college curriculum managers. Two librarians in the team participated in visits, and three prepared outlines of their own services. The visits led to a number of ideas about models of library or learning resource centre intervention to support teaching and learning. These are elaborated in Chapter 4.

Were any common factors found? We approached this issue in two ways: the questionnaire asked for the two most important features of library/LRC support for teaching and learning. Then, in interviews, teachers and librarians were asked what they would want to ensure was in place if they were to set up a library from scratch. The answers have been brought together in the section **Librarians and teachers on effectiveness** (Chapter 2), to see what common ground exists.

The views expressed by participants in both the survey and interviews are quoted throughout this report. Those from tertiary colleges and from sixth form colleges are identified as such. All the remaining quotations are from further education colleges.

Round Table meeting

The Round Table meeting organised by the Library Association in November 1995 for agencies interested in FE, including the FEFC, FEDA, the Association of College Principals and various librarians, gave an opportunity to talk about the project and to obtain a response to our ideas at that early stage.

Project seminars

Similarly, two seminars for college librarians were organised in February 1996, to enable the team to share preliminary results of the survey and discuss their implications and ways forward. College librarians from England and Scotland attended the events, which featured presentations on the Sheffield College *Information Skills Project*, FEDA's survey of *Learning and Technology in Colleges*, and *Effectiveness at Hackney Community College*. Some of the ideas emerging at this stage are explored in Chapter 4. Copies of the research instruments used and lists of participants in various aspects of the project are given in the appendices.

Library or Learning Resource Centre?

Learning Resource Centre

The potential for confusion in the use of the term 'learning resources' was amply illustrated in a recent Touche Ross report[2]:

> *LR . . . embraces:*
>
> - *the provision of information to support learning, including electronic sources such as audio and video tapes and CDs as well as traditional formats (books, journals etc.);*
> - *access to these sources of information, for example via inter-library loans or via the Janet or Super Janet networks;*
> - *teaching a range of research skills and training and support in the use of particular sources and technologies;*
> - *(advice on) design and production of learning materials and their incorporation into study programmes.*

Clearly there is confusion between defining 'learning resources' and describing some key functions of learning resource centres or libraries. These functions can be arranged to indicate three areas of interest.

Traditional areas of college library interest:

- provision of books, journals, audio and videotapes, CD-ROM, databases and other information-based materials to stimulate reading, encourage enquiry and support learning
- provision of facilities to enable staff and students to use these materials, including inter-library loan and copying facilities, and computer networks
- professional expertise to enable students and staff to use all these facilities

- teaching a range of library-focused skills to enable students and staff to use resources effectively.

IT-focused interests:

- teaching a range of IT-focused skills to enable students and staff to use the facilities available
- provision of networked computers and reprographic facilities to enable students and staff to process information, gain access to a variety of databases (including CD-ROMs), and use the Internet
- provision of on-site professional, technical and administrative help for students and staff.

'Independent supported learning':

- design and production of learning materials
- supervised facilities, including study space and networked computers, so that students can work independently
- provision of materials to enable students to complete specified parts of their courses and access other information
- professional expertise to identify students with particular learning difficulties and help students overcome any specific learning problems.

Four pertinent questions in many colleges are:

- Which of these three areas currently receive the most funding and resource commitment?
- Is this investment to the detriment of the other two areas?
- Is this pattern of expenditure likely to continue?
- Are there plans to converge these services?

Library

Asked how their central resource area was described, 47% of respondents to our survey said it was a Library, 44% worked in a Learning Resource Centre, and the others gave variations on Educational Support/Resource Centres/Services. (Margaret Chapman's survey found 52 variant titles!) We use the term 'library' to include Learning Resource Centres, except where a more specific designation is appropriate.

'Library' is the preferred term within this report because:

- it implies a core collection of resources and services which we regard as important for the college
- 'learning resource centre' is a somewhat amorphous term, at least as applied in some colleges, and
- the library is the area which has up to now been most consistently supported and resourced in the majority of colleges.

It is clear that the picture is rapidly changing. In some colleges the services are so fully integrated that it is difficult to distinguish a unique contribution from any of the three areas; elsewhere there is massive investment in IT to enable delivery of learning despite the increase in student numbers and decrease in taught hours. Any future survey is likely to require a very specific focus to allow for such changes. Meanwhile, the term 'library' is used in this report to refer to the libraries or learning resource centres of FE institutions.

Note: The term 'college' is used throughout this report to refer to FE institutions, including sixth form colleges, FE colleges and tertiary colleges.

Chapter 1

The context of effectiveness

When I arrived there was no electricity for any equipment in the library. – *College librarian*

The times they are a-changin'

The past few years, beginning with the run-up to college incorporation in April 1993, have seen unprecedented change in further education institutions and their libraries. With incorporation came new boards of governors, assuming broader responsibility for financial management, within different regional administrative structures directed by powerful national funding and inspection councils. In this more competitive environment, it is important for colleges to demonstrate how they are supporting their learning programmes. The role of the college library or learning resource centre is significant here, but only if the contribution can be clearly defined.

What are the main changes against which college libraries will be expected to show their worth? According to one librarian 'Senior managers understand two words – "retention" and "income".' These overriding concerns are prompted by a variety of factors. During interviews with college curriculum managers, in the seminars and

throughout the analysis of the questionnaire returns, a number of themes recurred. These are set out briefly below.

One survey question and associated comments gave a strong 'librarian's-eye view' of some major changes in colleges and their impact.

Respondents were asked whether ten changes in aspects of teaching and learning led to significant changes in the level of library use. Their replies are shown in table 1.1:

Table 1.1: The effects of certain changes in colleges on library use

Rank order		Much more	More	No real change	Less[1]	Weighted score[2]
1	GNVQs	69	65	12	0	203
2	Decrease in formal (teaching) contact hours	67	54	15	0	188
3	More returners/ mature students	46	65	22	3	154
4	HE franchising	36	45	25	3	114
5	IT support units	43	29	46	3	112
6	Open/flexible learning	38	36	61	1	105
7	NVQs	26	60	33	7	105
8	Adult education students	27	45	45	6	93
9	Distance learning	3	15	75	4	17
10	Assessment of prior learning	2	11	87	1	14

Notes

1. A category 'much less' was offered but not used.
2. The 'weighted score' was obtained by awarding two points for each 'much more' score, one point for 'more', no points for 'no real change', and deducting one point for 'less', and adding the results.

We then asked which of these developments have the most impact on the library. As table 1.2 shows, the replies were broadly similar to the previous table.

Table 1.2: The impact of certain changes on the library

Rank order		Responses (n=165)	% of respondents
1	GNVQs	63	38.2
2	Decrease in contact hours	40	24.2
3	HE franchising	24	14.5
4	More returners/ mature students	19	11.5
5	Open/flexible learning	18	10.9
6	IT support units	15	19.1
7	Adult education students	13	7.9
8	NVQs	11	6.7
9=	Assessment of prior learning	2	1.2
9=	Distance learning	2	1.2

Note:
Respondents were permitted to nominate more than one topic.

These figures confirm the anticipated direct link between 'library use' and 'impact on the library'. They leave little doubt about some of the dominant issues, particularly when account is taken of the fact that many colleges are not (yet) offering HE courses.

These and other externally generated pressures affecting colleges and their libraries are considered more fully below.

Student intake

Our survey shows a 55% increase in college student numbers between September 1990 and September 1995, even before taking account of enrolment at different times of year, the increased range of types of students, and of the colleges which did not exist in 1990 but now contribute to the grand total.

The immediate effects of increased student numbers on library provision are likely to be:

- increased pressure on space, books and other resources

- more complex logistical problems associated with the library induction of more groups of first-term students
- less time available to deal with more than the immediate problems at the enquiry desk.

Further effects are likely to depend upon the types of students being enrolled. To generalise from the questionnaire returns:

- more HE students may lead to increased pressure on quiet study areas and demand for more and better stock
- GNVQ students are likely to need space for group-working and access to current information in a variety of forms
- more part-time students will bring pressure for longer opening hours and more flexible issue systems, as well as increased stock losses
- more adult returners may need extra help from library staff to cope with library materials and systems, and IT facilities.

Those changes are looked at more fully in **The changing world of college libraries** (Chapter 2).

Reducing unit costs

Part of the response to the new, efficiency-driven, competitive environment of FE in general – and to pressure from the FEFC in particular – is for colleges to seek ways to reduce the per capita costs of teaching and learning. Simultaneously, government pressure has resulted in many courses being reduced to sixteen taught hours per week.

Two direct effects of these changes are a surge in occupation of library space and an increased onus on the student to learn when the lecturer is less often there to teach:

> *The Senior Management Team . . . have now taken on Resource-Based Learning as an 'answer' to coping with more students on less money.*

The recent FEDA report *Learning and technology in further education colleges*,[3] prepared for the FEFC's Learning and Technology Committee, found:

> *. . . a dominant [college] concern that students should be helped to develop responsibilities for and eventually control of their own learning. This is not surprising, in that the modularisation and unitisation of the FE curriculum requires that students develop these capabilities. [p. 12]*

Whether independent students can be created instantly by handing over the responsibility for learning or investing in programmed learning workbooks, will be considered in Chapter 5.

Information technology and learning: a chimera transformed?

Can there be hope that, after two generations of largely unfulfilled promise, information technology is beginning to make an impact in supporting learning? Recent years have seen the rapid introduction of CD-ROM technology into college libraries, but this advance has been overshadowed by the banks of IT workstations in every cabled nook and networked cranny. There has been a shift in some colleges from open-access or drop-in centres concentrating on basic IT skills 'on demand' towards more structured use of learning centres to pursue course elements. According to the FEDA report quoted above:

> *Colleges are developing learning resource centres, equipped with computers where, at least in theory, students can learn at their own pace and at their preferred time, using carefully prepared flexible learning packages. In practice, students are more likely to use these centres because, mainly for economic reasons, their classroom sessions have been reduced and they are required to prepare good copies of their hand-written assignments using a word processor. Observation of student use of college learning centres' computing facilities indicates that word-processing is by far the most frequently used application by most students . . .*[3] *[p 6]*

. . . an observation confirmed during project visits.

Competence-based education

One of the biggest changes in the post-compulsory curriculum has been the move towards competence-based courses. Effectively, this means a curriculum defined in terms of specific learning outcomes ('competencies') stipulated in detail. The result, in the view of some college managers, has been diminished choice about how to achieve educational goals. The assessment-led process requires tutors to focus on satisfying detailed performance criteria and range and evidence indicators, in each element of a Unit, rather than on the best approach for the students. This can mean that students are much more instrumental in their approach to assignments, which can be viewed as tasks performed to gather and present evidence of competence.

In relation to GNVQs there are potential opportunities for librarians' active support of teaching and learning, and, perhaps, in teaching core skills. Students must demonstrate skills in planning, information-seeking and handling, and evaluating their own performance. Clearly, libraries have a potentially important role in supporting these processes, as well as acting as hosts for a plethora of GNVQ assignments. How college libraries cope with these challenges is considered in Chapter 4.

Relationships with higher education

The interaction between the higher and further education sectors is growing, through alliances based on franchised courses, joint and accredited courses. Some FE colleges are trying to reduce the pressure on central resources by seeking associate status, giving their students preferred access to linked HE institutions. The implications for FE libraries were identified in a recent article by Donald Mitchell, editor of the COFHE *Bulletin*:

> *Firstly, library services have to be involved in course development to ensure adequate resourcing for the higher level courses . . . there exist nationally a number of well designed models for validation where university library staff assess the ability of the FE library to support*

higher level students on the franchised courses. This undoubtedly aids college librarians in their requests for funding. The critical factor here is comparability of experience.

Secondly, the HE sector is forced by funding weighted in favour of science and technology courses to limit arts, business studies and humanities access to HE . . . science and technology courses will have to be given greater prominence, with obvious implications for the libraries seeking to support such courses.[4] *[p. 266]*

Conclusion

This chapter was not intended as an exhaustive review of college concerns likely to affect the library in its support role for teaching and learning. What of the new relationships between schools, sixth form colleges and FE colleges? Where will future competition and alliances emerge? And how will adult and continuing education survive without an effective national funding structure?

The essential point is that 'No college is an island, entire of itself' as John Donne probably intended to write. What influences the college and conditions its view of effective teaching and learning will eventually determine the direction that the library takes. How the college library responds to the central resourcing issues raised by the changes identified here will, at least in part, decide whether college libraries establish themselves as the key college-wide resource supporting teaching and learning, as part of the central resourcing response, or as an expensive and expendable anachronism.

Summary

- Senior managers' overriding concerns are 'retention' and 'income'.
- The introduction of GNVQs and decrease in teaching contact hours have led to significant changes in college library use.

- The immediate effects of increased student numbers are likely to be increased pressure on resources, logistical problems associated with library induction, and less time available to deal with immediate problems at the enquiry desk.
- Pressure from FEFC to reduce per capita costs has resulted in an increase in occupation of library space and an emphasis on students' responsibility for their own learning.
- There has been a shift from drop-in centres, offering basic IT skills training, towards structured use of learning centres to pursue course elements.
- GNVQs provide opportunities for librarians' active support of teaching and learning.

Chapter 2

The FE college library and the college

College librarianship should be about developing new skills rather than new roles. – *Learning resources manager*

Library support for teaching and learning: 1995-6

The questionnaires

The survey first looked at the FE college library within the context of the college as a whole. Initial questions gathered basic information about the college and its library, including student numbers, library staffing and opening hours and expenditure on the library. More detailed questions looked at library interventions into the college curriculum; library staff involvement in aspects of management directly affecting curriculum; and professional development of library staff. Finally, it investigated how well the library performed, and the most important features of, and impediments to, library support for teaching and learning.

The responding libraries and learning resource centres

As noted earlier, the central resource area is described as a Library by 47% of respondents and a Learning Resource Centre by 44%. The

remainder work in variations on Educational Support/Resource Centres/Services.

Of the colleges providing full-time equivalent ('fte') numbers of FE students in September 1995, 29% have 1,000 or fewer students, 27% up to 2,000 students, and 44% are larger. There is no evidence to suggest that 'Learning Resource Centre' is favoured in larger colleges, as might have been imagined. There is no statistically significant relationship between college size and preferred designation. (Note, however, that these respondents total just over one-third of all colleges in England; the pattern elsewhere may be different.) Ninety-one respondents gave full-time equivalent FE student numbers for both 1990 and 1995; the mean 1990 figure was 1,450 compared with 2,269 in 1995, an increase of 55%.

Most (87%) of the responding libraries employ one or more (up to 12) full-time librarians, and 62% have one or more (up to 8) other professional staff. Not all respondents supplied full-time equivalent information for their posts.

The responding libraries are open for an average 49.3 hours per week, 15% of them for 40 or fewer hours and 42% for 51 or more hours per week during term-time. Some libraries (23) are open at the weekend (usually on Saturday morning only); a few others are considering doing so in response to increased part-time student numbers. The 117 college libraries that open regularly during holidays do so for a mean 36 hours per week. Medians of 53 hours and 35 hours (holidays) were reported in the UK-wide Library Association Survey of 1993-4.[5]

The range of annual library budgets, excluding staff costs, is predictably enormous, varying from £1,500 to £167,600 with a mean of £37,292. Median expenditure was £26,411 in the UK-wide Library Association survey of 1993-4.[5]

A more detailed picture is given in table 2.1:

Table 2.1: Size of library budget (1995-96)

	number (n=157)	% of total respondents
Budget (£K)	22	13.3
Less than 10	52	31.5
10-25	52	30.9
26-50	51	30.9
More than 50	32	19.4

A potentially disturbing picture is presented when the library budget is related to the size of the college (in full-time equivalent FE numbers) as table 2.2 shows:

Table 2.2: Total expenditure per student

Range (fte FE Students)	Mean expenditure per student (£)
Less than 500	55.5
501-1,000	20.5
1,001-1,500	21.2
1,501-2,000	13.3
2,001 +	16.4
All colleges	17.5

These figures take no account of the number of higher education students served by colleges (a substantial number in larger colleges), and exclude the eighteen colleges where full-time equivalent numbers (or other figures) are not available. The figures should be treated with some caution, because one or two colleges may have included staff costs in their library expenditure figures (although asked to provide the figure excluding that element).

Making due allowance for higher overhead per student in smaller colleges, because a basic library service is required by even the smallest, the expenditure per student might have been expected to decline steadily as overall numbers increased, with a 'surge' if a size category had a larger than usual number of split-site colleges. However, the figures show disproportionately low levels of expenditure among

colleges in the 501-2,000 range, reinforcing the views about under-funding of college libraries expressed in Chapter 3.

These are, of course, crude presentations, because they allow for neither higher education student numbers, nor split-site college libraries.

Curriculum interventions

Main types of curriculum intervention

Respondents were asked how often library or LRC staff were involved in twelve different types of curriculum intervention, and whether these interventions were usually *ad hoc* or planned. The replies are shown in table 2.3. More elaborate and complex support for teaching and learning are less prevalent than the more 'traditional' types of involvement.

No particular surprises are revealed in the balance between planned and *ad hoc* interventions. As the table indicates, college librarians routinely plan activities which have to be fitted into the college timetable, ranging from induction to programme delivery and course assessment. However, much of their support work with teachers, such as discussing course materials or preparing materials for assignments, occurs on an *ad hoc* basis. There is presumably scope for more of this work to be planned to 'ration' limited librarian time available and free up time to meet priority library objectives. At risk of proposing heresy, some college librarians (especially those with small staff) may wish to consider responding to overwhelming demand by following the pattern of the few reported here and limiting informal guidance sessions for students to specific hours, rather than commit themselves wholly on the altar of responsiveness.

Respondents were asked which, if any, of the listed activities had significantly increased or decreased in importance over the past three years. The 165 respondents identified only 39 activities among them as having decreased. By contrast, several activities are looming larger in a significant number of colleges, as can be seen in Table 2.4.

Table 2.3: Curriculum interventions by library/LRC staff

	very frequently	regularly	occasionally	never	usually: ad hoc	usually: planned	weighted scores
1) informal individual guidance to students	123	38	3	1	117	16	448
2) induction sessions for new students	98	62	3	1	4	132	421
3) discussing materials for courses with lecturers	28	67	60	8	103	28	278
4) preparing/supervising assignments helping students find their way round the library	28	43	72	22	20	97	242
5) induction linked to course requirements (eg sessions on library research at beginning of an assignment)	12	31	104	16	27	90	202
6) delivering information/ study/library/learning skills programmes	17	36	72	35	15	75	195
7) preparing materials for assignments or courses devised by lecturers (eg reading lists)	9	22	86	37	56	44	157
8) review of courses	6	32	34	91	6	41	116
9) joint planning of assignments or courses with lecturers	0	9	66	88	–	–	–
10) joint delivery of assignments with lecturers	0	5	58	99	10	32	68
11) assessment of students or course elements	4	4	29	127	6	20	49
12) joint monitoring and evaluation of assignments with lecturers	1	2	31	121	5	18	38

'Weighted scores' were obtained by awarding 3 points for responses of 'very frequently', 2 for 'regularly' and 1 for 'occasionally' to clarify variation in response levels.

Table 2.4: Activities which have significantly increased in importance in the past three years

Rank order	Activity	No of citations (n=165)	% of total respondents
1	Induction sessions for new students	95	57.6
2	Informal individual guidance	76	46.1
3=	Delivering information etc skills programmes	45	27.3
3=	Discussing materials for courses	45	27.3
5	Induction linked to course requirements	38	23.0
6	Preparing and supervising library assignments	33	20.0
7	Preparing materials for assignments	27	16.4
8	Review of courses	24	14.5
9	Joint planning of assignments with lecturers	22	13.3
10	Assessment of students or course elements	19	11.5
11	Joint delivery of assignments with lecturers	14	8.5
12	Joint monitoring and evaluation with lecturers	11	6.7

Note
Respondents were free to nominate as many topics as they wished (mean = 2.7 topics).

What intervention entails

Many respondents added comments about particular types of intervention which cast light on the issues and frustrations involved. Some of them are presented below.

Induction

Many colleges are still inundated with parties of new students during their induction in term one, but some variations were reported:

Both librarians are involved and it creates major disturbance in library use. It now covers all the first half-term. *(VI Form College)*

The Librarian provides a library introduction and supporting handout/guide to Personal Tutors, so that they can cascade this to their tutor groups . . . but only FT students are in a tutor group. (Tertiary)

We have been trying to 'sell' induction linked to course requirements but it is an uphill struggle.

We have made an in-house video giving all the basic facts (how to join; how many books can be borrowed; cost of photocopying etc.). This frees staff time for induction in the OPAC (we try to ensure every student does at least one search during an induction session).

Individual guidance

Individual guidance to students is not always informal:

The library is also the centre of formal individual guidance to students. This takes the forms of learning support and career guidance - the latter also includes liaison with [the local careers agency].

Help with literacy and numeracy takes place in the library and bookings are made at the library counter.

Assignments

There appear to be two main factors limiting collaboration with teaching staff over assignments: lack of time and particular views about appropriate involvement for the librarian. Several respondents suggested that lack of time is a major limiting factor:

We make great efforts to liaise with lecturers but, with only two professional staff, cannot be away from the library too often.

Decreases are due to lack of staff time and increased pressures on other forms of service delivery, not because these activities are considered as having less importance.

As to the appropriateness of such interventions by librarians, restrictions can be posed by some lecturing staff who hold limited views of the capabilities of librarians :

The situation is improving with working relationships being built with course team leaders. There is more opportunity for feedback on resourcing levels for assignments that have been set – we can recommend changes. *(Tertiary)*

There is a tradition here of teachers carrying out any library related activities which I am slowly attempting to break down.
(VI Form College)

On the other hand, not all librarians feel it is appropriate to do more than liaise with teaching staff about ensuring adequate availability of resources. The chief librarian at one college visited makes a strong case that the librarian's primary role is to respond quickly and proactively to the resource implications of curriculum delivery, not to become involved in wider aspects of curriculum development. The issue bears further consideration, because of the potential merging of the roles of teacher and librarian implicit in recasting lecturers as learning support staff.

Collaborations with teaching staff

Some librarians report an increase in their collaborative activities with teaching staff:

We are trying to establish a system of rolling stock weeding and updating involving academic staff. *(Tertiary)*

Inspection has helped us to make formal contact with Heads of Programmes and we hope this will continue in the future. *(Tertiary)*

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The qualified librarian is also an A level geography teacher and course-co-ordinator for GNVQ Leisure and Tourism. This helps very much in liaising with other teaching staff, particularly GNVQ generally. However, this spreads the librarian's talents very thin in finding time to run the library! *(VI Form College)*

We are working towards developing a scheme of 'link librarians' who will be involved in Course Planning stage, Course Review Teams etc. Currently the scheme is operational in two faculties and although in its infancy works well.

Several variants on the last of these initiatives were reported. Some college libraries are appointing faculty, department or subject librarians to enhance active communication 'and attempt to be proactive rather than reactive'. Ironically, some university libraries appear to be moving away from this model towards general functional responsibilities. Elsewhere the role of head of the library service is redefined more broadly:

My job description is currently under review and aspects such as curriculum planning have been drawn attention to.

The College has not had a Head of Library and Learning Resources for the last two and a half years. Many new initiatives have not been developed because of this situation. Now that the Head is in place things are starting to happen. The College has a strong commitment to resource-based learning and changes will be made to the role of the librarian. (Tertiary)

Unfortunately, some librarians are in danger of being sidelined by college developments:

The involvement of the Resource Centre staff in the planning, delivery and assessment of assignments is now growing. The process does not currently extend to the library. *(VI Form College)*

Because Margaret Chapman had recently conducted a survey on User Education[1] (with British Library funding), the questionnaire dealt only

briefly with delivering information/study/library/learning skills programmes. More attention was given to this important area of library work during the visits to colleges. One statement about the involvement of library staff in assessment may be of interest here:

> *Our assessment is of LRC induction courses, written and delivered by the LRC but recognised by courses as part of information skills evidence [which students are required to show in competence-based courses].*

Work with college course teams

Where do increased levels of library staff activity have the most impact? Do more substantial forms of involvement usually focus on particular course teams? This is so, according to 103 people (62%), who give a predictably long list of the courses involved. The main categories are:

GNVQs (various)	64 replies	(38.8%)
'A' levels (various)	44	(26.7%)
Access courses	39	(23.6%)
Higher Education courses	33	(20.0%)

Intervening: an overview

Clearly, college library staff are heavily engaged in 'traditional' areas of interaction with teaching and learning: student guidance, initial induction and, to a lesser extent, running library assignments, as well as discussing course materials with lecturers. Published research suggests that induction into use of library facilities is effective only when linked to course requirements.[6] However college librarians do not appear to be heavily involved in this area, possibly because of the major impediments reported later: insufficient time, resistance from teaching staff, lack of suitable space, and the potential numbers of students. Perhaps more worrying, few librarians appear to work regularly with lecturers on preparation of materials, or planning, delivering and evaluating assignments, although a significant number are involved in information skills programme delivery and increasingly in course review.

Involvement in the college curriculum management machinery

Committee involvement

The next set of questions dealt with curriculum committee involvement and other aspects of college management activity. According to 31% of respondents, librarians are members of one or more course teams, although attendance is usually selective. This is not surprising, given that one college reports having over 200 course teams. In another, the library staff visit each course team once a year. Several people point to the time pressures involved:

> *Membership of course teams has suffered through lack of library staffing and pressures of service delivery.*

Many respondents (23%) report that other LRC staff (eg IT managers) are members of course teams; a similar number say that librarians or other LRC staff are members of curriculum boards, boards of study or equivalents in particular curriculum areas.

More significantly, given the cross-curricular service role of libraries and learning resource centres, 133 people (81%) say that the person responsible for the library is a member of the college academic board, curriculum planning committee or equivalent college-wide body.

Senior management support

The Library Association survey[5] showed that in 1993-4 only 4% of heads of library service were SMT members, so we did not pursue this question. Instead, respondents were asked if the college senior management actively encouraged librarian involvement in the curriculum. Depressingly, fewer than half (46%) report active support, although a number of other replies suggest 'passive support' or support for the library as a college resource. As one librarian observes:

Involvement is welcomed but not actively encouraged. There are difficulties in engaging senior management in a strategic vision of the Learning Resource Service.

Active support is interpreted in widely different ways: from championing by a member of the senior management team to procedures to ensure librarian involvement in all key aspects of college curriculum planning.

Resources for courses

Concern that the apparent acceleration in new course development might weaken any existing link between course demands and library resources is fuelled by the next two questions. First, does the person responsible for the library have an opportunity to comment on resource implications of new course proposals? The replies are shown in table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Opportunities provided to comment on resource implications of new courses

	No. of responses	%
Always provided	32	19.4
Usually	33	20.0
Sometimes	73	44.2
Never	25	15.2
No reply	2	1.2
	165	100.0

Those who, at least sometimes, have this opportunity were asked if it makes any actual difference to the size of the library or LRC budget. Only 30% feel that it does:

Sometimes so in the development of prestigious courses

The budget has tripled this year.

One who feels that being consulted makes no difference added tartly:

A fact I have commented on!

The changing world of college libraries

We have looked at librarians' attempts to intervene in the processes of teaching and learning and their management in colleges. However, it is apparent that the pressure on library resources in many colleges severely limits the scope of librarians to be proactive in areas of their choice. Whether the college library is seen as effective in supporting teaching and learning depends substantially on whether library staff are able to find the right strategies for, or simply to cope with, the growing demand.

In reviewing how librarians are responding to the challenges of immediate demands on their services, it is important to recognise that many college libraries started from a weak position upon incorporation. That weakness was recognised in England by the Further Education Funding Council from the outset.[7] The Chief Inspector reported that:

> *Libraries are often a weak aspect of provision. Many . . . are too small for the number of enrolled students, have insufficient study spaces and an inadequate or outdated book stock. [p. 32]*

Much the same picture had earlier been reported in Wales, where the Inspectorate concluded that few colleges can provide sufficient opportunities for students to study in comfort in their own time.[8] The situation in many sixth form colleges appeared to be even worse, according to findings of the 1991-92 COLRIC survey.[9]

Although the years immediately after incorporation saw substantial increases in spending on books and other resources in many libraries, there are strong signs that such additional spending is being curtailed or reduced, long before the expenditure could transform the library stocks.

Several colleges report that their libraries have been expanded or new libraries or learning resource centres are planned, but most college libraries face a long period of making the best of limited space and resources.

The picture is complicated by the recent rapid expansion of learning support centres and IT centres in response to the imperative to increase student numbers and reduce taught hours. We have already seen which

externally-stimulated changes have had most impact on colleges and their libraries. More detailed consideration of these and other internally-generated changes shows that their effects are by no means uniform.

GNVQs and the college library

The onset of GNVQs has extended the range of information required. There are some variations of emphasis:

> *a broader coverage of subject areas; more local and ephemeral information.* *(Tertiary college)*

> *. . . we need a very wide general information base to respond to rapidly changing modules.* *(Tertiary college)*

> *The GNVQs are needing high level, very specific information, which we don't currently hold.*

> *With GNVQs it has been the changing of the syllabus which has delayed publication of relevant books. Vast areas of stock have become redundant. One hundred students want one of the fifteen GNVQ business books published.*

Predictably, the need to demonstrate competence in information skills and collect evidence results in groups of students descending on the library:

> *Core skills IT within GNVQ courses leads to higher levels of IT support being needed; the greater quantity of group work in these courses leads to increased noise.*

The impact on the library of increases in other types of courses

Higher education franchising and other forms of HE provision have led directly to improvements in the stock of some college libraries at the insistence of the partner University. College librarians generally welcome HE inspection of the library, and find discussion about resources with other professionals beneficial.

Students make intensive ('sometimes inappropriate') use of library resources, including heavy use of study spaces, but they can also be more assertive in stating their requirements:

> *HE franchising has increased students' demands for adequate resources, particularly for CD-ROM provision and computers.*

Some librarians identify HE students as more aware of library services and more insistent upon using them, but one finds them 'fairly unobtrusive and not too demanding'.

The sheer number of new courses also presents problems, as can be gauged from the following litany:

> *Since 1990 the following new course/subjects have begun: Media, Film, Communication, Anthropology, several Sports courses, Beauty Therapy, Photography, Design and related courses, Cert. Ed. Management, plus franchise courses.*

Changes in students and in approaches to learning

Mature students

With mature students in significant numbers there are usually calls for longer opening hours, silent study areas (a less distracting environment than home), and increased IT support, because older students tend to be less confident in using the technology. One librarian adds:

> *Mature students are more demanding – both in terms of additional help needed and being more vociferous!*

Part-time students

Some colleges report a decline in the number of part-time students and several sixth form colleges had none. However, increases in part-time student numbers elsewhere take a toll. The main problem appears to be

the lack of a corresponding increase in library funding, despite the point that 'a part-time student is still a whole library user!' As a result 'we more often fail to meet demand for certain core or key texts now'. The requirements for part-timers are summarised by a librarian as:

> *More guides to help, better induction, short-term loans, and better reference textbook collection – parity of treatment*

but only two respondents report that money to increase the stock had been forthcoming. One of these also reports that:

> *book loss has increased, because part-time students pay no deposit and are more difficult to trace if they leave.*

An influx of part-time students is also likely to put further pressure on space and opening hours in the evenings and at weekends which

> *cannot be met with the current staffing without lower service levels during the core of the day.* *(Tertiary college)*

There are changes in the patterns of stock use:

> *Greater pressure on book stock has necessitated the introduction of short loans and reference copies of standard texts.*

Students attending college less frequently sometimes require longer loan periods and telephone renewals and, like mature students, more support

> *with study skills, personal inductions, CD-ROMs and confidence building.* *(Tertiary college)*

One respondent reports that:

> *There were comments in the course reviews about the inadequacy of the stock*

others point to the need to provide specialist subject collections specific to part-time courses.

College-generated changes affecting libraries

Respondents were invited to comment on any of twelve changes introduced by colleges, in terms of their effect on the library's resourcing or its contribution to teaching and learning. The resulting 1,179 statements presented a considerable challenge to our powers of synthesis! For the record, table 2.6 presents the number of comments under each heading. The comments are summarised under broad headings below.

Table 2.6: The impacts of internally-generated college changes

		Library resourcing		Library contribution to teaching and learning	
			% of respondents		% of respondents
1.	Enhanced availability of IT in the library/LRC for library users	128	77.6	127	77.0
2.	Involvement of librarians and other LRC staff in college staff development	68	41.2	60	36.4
3.	Inclusion in college strategic plan	75	45.5	49	29.7
4.	Enhanced availability of IT elsewhere in the college	75	45.5	48	29.1
5.	Convergence of services	56	33.9	52	31.5
6.	Performance indictors and targets	70	42.4	36	21.8
7.	Professional support for teachers through staff libraries and collections of teaching materials	65	39.4	39	23.6
8.	Investors in people pilot project	42	25.5	24	14.5
9.	Systematic self-assessment	37	22.4	18	10.9
10.	Specialist library posts for student support/info. skills developmeni	30	18.2	21	12.7
11.	Non-convergence of services	21	12.7	18	10.9
12.	Service-level agreements	13	7.9	7	42

Convergence or non-convergence of services

Converging services

The converging services usually involve the library and IT centre or learning support centre. Variations on the theme involve merging the library – physically or under single management – with open access units, open learning centres, curriculum workshops, additional support, reprographic services and audio-visual services.

These amalgamation or realignments are widely reported as bringing several benefits:

- improved collections of resources

  A much wider range of resources available for all students

- expansion of the integrated services
- increased budgets and better allocations of funds
- 'less time spent on managing the resources but more cross-college involvement'.

Specific benefits achieved include regrading professional posts, acknowledgement of the need for IT skills training for library staff and greater acceptance of the need for technical support and library expertise.

Some other consequences of the changed relationships reported are:

> *The learning centre supports core skills work in collaboration with the library. There is more use of IT. Resources for materials, equipment and staffing have been increased, with an enhancement for the library service.* *(Tertiary college)*

> *This has formalised and publicised our joint condition to supporting learning. There has been much work on this by senior management.* *(Tertiary college)*

Some disadvantages of convergence identified are:

The budget has grown with student numbers but this doesn't cover the growing cost of IT provision.

There has been no budget for the Resources Centre since the TVEI budget ceased in April '95. *(Tertiary college)*

More is required of library staff in terms of student discipline; we are often required to supervise students on up to 50 computers. (Tertiary college)

The shared IT communications system appears to be slowing down our own system.

How does convergence of services contribute to teaching and learning?

Some of the benefits regularly identified include:

- increased scope for additional student support: core skills help following an initial assessment; IT skills support; teaching numeracy and communication
- provision of professional teaching support for information/study skills and assignments
- more recognition of the importance of information skills and core skills
- combined expertise leading to more effective work in support of flexible/independent learning
- joint working, enabling the team to draw upon a wider range of expertise and experience ('Ideas and expectations change').

Several comments suggest that the benefits are broadly pervasive:

Supporting curriculum core skills; study, information technology and information skills; support for academic staff; planning; improved environments and new services etc. etc.

All open access areas to support and encourage independent learning are staffed and open long hours. Course teams are encouraged to include learning resources staff in curriculum planning and delivery.

Interestingly, in view of current discussions about the apparent trend towards merged librarian and teacher roles, one tertiary college librarian sees the benefit in

A more integrated view of the different ways in which the library and the learning centre support students.

Benefits are also seen in interaction with college departments, if only because more staff are linked with the faculties. The only slightly negative note sounded is from a tertiary college librarian who reports

Some improvement, but many lecturers still seem wary of using it.

Operating separately

A few librarians report convergence of major central resources without involving the library, or 'token convergence'.

The learning centre and the library are called 'Resources' but in fact are very separate.

Elsewhere, the various resource services continue to operate separately. The reported resourcing consequences – largely negative – include:

- fragmentation of IT support
- competition to obtain and retain resources (eg, between the library and IT centre over CD-ROMs, multimedia resources and IT resources)
- difficulty for teachers in accessing shared software
- confusion in purchasing hardware and software
- waste and unnecessary duplication of resources
- lack of central control over copying or copyright compliance.

Only a few comments cover the consequences of diverged services on teaching and learning. Again, emphasis is on fragmentation of services and difficulty in gaining access to resources. One tertiary college librarian warns that 'a large amount of very poor material is being produced.'

IT in the library

A majority of librarians report that they are spending more (sometimes much more) on information technology for their libraries. Several have secured additional capital funding for this purpose. Although some colleges allocate extra money for CD-ROMs and software, in libraries without additional funding, software expenditure (and maintenance contracts in a few cases) are a drain on operational budgets formulated in earlier, print-dominated times.

The prospect of upgrading library hardware in response to escalating demand is viewed with apprehension in some colleges. Several libraries provide Internet access for students. This is justified in one college on the basis that HE students need access to a broader range of resources to compensate for the limitations of the college library as an HE resource. This development tends to be viewed positively by librarians – providing that they are not called upon to foot the telephone and licence bills from their restricted funds.

The consensus is that increased IT in the library leads to heavier student use. This may begin with word processing but can lead to information searches and other library use:

> *IT facilities attract non-users to the Library who then do make use of other facilities.*

An exception is the tertiary college librarian who says 'I'm not sure if it contributes to learning – but it is popular with the students!'

A few librarians detect improvements in information retrieval skills (or 'an improved staff and student skill base') as a result of 'exposure' to information technology in the library setting. This takes the form of:

Increasingly autonomous use of the library by students and lecturers.

Becoming familiar with databases; using the library catalogue more.

The NCET *Libraries of the Future* research project detects benefits for school students using IT, such as enhanced précis skills, critical skills and visual literacy. Students show improved understanding of information classification and hierarchies. Whether similar or further benefits are gained by FE students working with IT in library settings bears investigation.

Librarians do not leave IT-related information skills development to chance. Several report providing CD-ROM introductions on request, as well as other forms of support:

LRC staff now providing basic IT skills support to students, including seminars and workshops.

Teaching specialists are available for IT support; Technician support is timetabled for the library/LC. *(Tertiary college)*

There are more information skills teaching requirements, which the teaching staff feel unable to do, therefore the library staff deliver these. *(VI form college)*

Interesting reflections are offered on the merging of roles:

IT support staff in the library direct students to relevant traditional materials and also support students' work generally eg study skills.

There has been a change in role of the Media Resources Technician to IT Support/LRC Technician.

Increased library provision of information technology also has an effect on teaching staff:

Information retrieval from IT-based resources is higher on the agenda so there are more referrals to library CD-ROMs. *(Tertiary college)*

Some projects are set throughout the year which involve use of the library as a necessary component. *(VI form college)*

Teachers are more inclined to see the benefits and to incorporate IT use into schemes of work. *(VI form college)*

Such developments carry INSET implications, some met by librarians:

Internet demonstrations brought staff into the library in large numbers.

Library staff have taken on a more advanced role in supporting lecturers.

It is acknowledged, however that the training requirements go beyond specific IT use:

Staff development needs to be more concerned with supporting users of new technology.

How has the advent of extensive information technology affected student use of the library? The main changes are:

- more coursework produced by students in the library:

  We offer a drop-in facility for processing assignments, improving skills – with some periods of tutor support *(Tertiary college)*

- greater resources for doing research using current information:

  CD-ROM databases have contributed very positively to the quality of the students' dissertation research.

- use of a wide range of materials:

  Students make extensive use of newspapers, CDs etc.

- a relative lack of learning packages and other learning support materials so that IT use is 'largely informational'. Some colleges have developed unique materials (eg, an agricultural college's herd record) which are heavily used by students.

- Use of IT to broaden access to materials, although this has inevitable consequences.

  Bibliographic databases put pressure on inter library loan requests.

Overall, this investment means that some at least of the libraries are:

> *Much improved: we are now seen as a vital centre for CLAIT word processing, CD-Rom research, the Internet etc.* *(Tertiary college)*

Impact on the libraries

The growing demand for CD-ROMs and other forms of electronic information, and more hardware, leads to added pressure on space reserved for private study or groupwork (one terminal equals two study carrels, according to an ergonomically-minded respondent). Increased use also:

- presents a challenge in dealing with IT resources as part of library induction

  Students – especially the younger ones – asked for more information about CD-ROM, and Internet, and the computerised catalogue in their induction.

- creates supervision and noise problems in some libraries
- raises pressure for extended opening hours, because 'Students want to stay longer when they are logged on.'

More technology also puts a strain on colleges' technical support capacity, especially at times when only library staff are available to help. This, and the increasing sophistication of IT equipment, highlights the need for more library staff training when:

> *lack of technical support often leaves the library staff looking as though they do not understand computers, particularly when open-access computer rooms are the responsibility of the library during evening hours of opening.*

IT elsewhere in the college

Several colleges report that IT developments elsewhere in the college have been to the detriment of library provision:

> *We have often had to compete fiercely for resources, being seen as a second line service. I believe this view is changing.*
>
> *Shortage of technician support available for the library.*
>
> *Decreasing funding for IT developments in the library. This has implications also for CD-ROM provision in the library.*

Elsewhere, the resource allocation decisions appear inappropriate, again with a negative effect on the library:

> *It tends to be concentrated in the computing room, which is rarely entered by those not studying computing! The library attracts less confident IT users, but is not given extra funds in view of this.*
>
> *(VI form college)*

A few libraries need not compete for resources since they are:

> *Resourcing most of the provision of cross-college CD-ROM usage on networks.*
>
> *Surprisingly, in the forefront of technology development through the Internet and CD-ROMs.*
>
> *Only the library has the range of multimedia.*

There are dangers, however, in this lead role, especially if the library ends up paying for network licences when they order software which is then networked throughout the college.

Where development has taken place both in the library and elsewhere in the college, it can have diametrically opposite effects. Provision in other parts of the college can ease the pressure on the library through:

Reduction in the use of LRC computers for word processing, resulting in an improved environment for study.

The same effect can, however, be viewed negatively:

This has decreased library staffs' role in basic IT teaching and support. I think there is a changed perception of the role of the library too (possibly for the worse).

On the other hand, increasing familiarity with IT and its potential:

Has created more pressure on the LRC as students learn to use the technology. We now need extra funds to cope with need and upgrade, but these aren't available.

Life can also be difficult when the library / LRC is the main 'beneficiary' of IT funding in the college:

This puts pressure on open access computers in libraries (limited). This is an IT Curriculum issue in my college; resourcing is not sufficient to satisfy the demand for providing open access suites staffed by Technical Academic staff – NOT librarians. (Tertiary college)

Where development takes place elsewhere in the college as well as in the library, it is generally seen as making a positive contribution to teaching and learning.

Software is often networked across the college and students can access packages in the library. Also students are made increasingly aware of IT generally and see the library as a key provider. (VI form college)

Students who have some formal IT teaching can access information more easily. The college has an excellent computer resource centre sited close to the library. Students appear to use the two facilities in tandem.

The library catalogue and CD-ROM menu is available on the network and can be used as part of a session without having to visit the library.

All students are encouraged to gain RSA CLAIT qualification.

(Tertiary college)

The effects on the library/LRC of such developments are less clear-cut. A sixth form college librarian reports rapid integration of LRC work with that of general course teams; another library has solved the problem of overseeing the burgeoning services:

> *We have a new person this term who is a library assistant three afternoons and takes charge of computer sites in three evenings. This means our students now have IT support for all the hours the library is open. A very useful and appreciated new service.*

Elsewhere the 'joint' development suffers from:

> *Poor forward thinking. Departments see the significance of CD-ROM in the LRC and want to duplicate it in the classroom. They would prefer everything to be departmentally-based.*

A final word on information technology and its impact should, perhaps, be reserved for one of the most heartfelt comments offered in the survey:

> *IT also allows for the production of paperwork at an awesome rate – I spend more time than ever filling in forms and filing documents.*

Staff development and Investors in People

The involvement of librarians and other LRC staff in college staff development varies enormously: from a total lack of opportunity to participate ('There is never any cover available') to equality of opportunity ('No real differentiation is made between teachers and librarians'), or variable opportunity ('There is good provision for librarians but no provision of formal training for library assistants').

Two key influences, at least in a minority of colleges, are inclusion of library targets in the college development plan and participation in the 'Investors in People' programme (IIP). The former makes it:

Much easier to arrange INSET for non-professional staff, if this is linked to the Strategic Plan. *(Tertiary college)*

Where colleges participate in IIP, experience again varies substantially. Some people identify no benefits at the library level and others see more general emphasis on staff development or specific training opportunities for library staff. One disillusioned respondent says of the programme:

This offers nothing that a coherent staff development policy doesn't – except a blue plaque. Naturally we are trying to get the IIP award – this began in June '95. More meaningless paperwork with no practical benefit for staff!

On the other hand, two librarians use almost the same words to predict that 'better trained Library Staff will increase their contribution and make it more effective'. Only one librarian reports a continuing wide gulf between academic and support staff. However, where librarians are involved in general staff training, some see substantial benefits in interaction:

It improves communication and understanding of respective roles. It identifies areas where support and teaching staff can work together. (Tertiary college)

A few libraries are involved in college-wide 'open governance' through access to management information initiatives. Most of these are at an early stage but one tertiary librarian ruefully notes that:

The library is now the repository for all minutes of meetings – one person has looked at them this term.

Several librarians are involved in providing INSET for teacher colleagues, usually on aspects of information seeking through IT. Benefits are identified for both sides. For the library:

This has ensured awareness of developments. The LRC can therefore stay one step ahead.

Higher regard for the expertise of library staff, especially in the area of information technology. *(Tertiary college)*

Also, teachers may become more confident in using IT and other library resources ('Reluctant teachers are a bit keener on IT and CD-Roms').

A few library staff provide information skills development or similar INSET for teaching staff, usually as part of the college's support of flexible learning. This can be effective if offered from a learning centre, but 'mainstream librarians' in this area may be viewed with suspicion:

Resource-based learning is a contentious issue at the college – teachers see this as a threat to their jobs due to decrease in contact time. The library's involvement, especially my high profile in introducing IT, includes the library in that threat. *(VI form college)*

Specialist library posts for student support/information skills development

Some colleges (18%) report structured support for students through assignment of staff (up to nine) to specialist roles. These range from learning resources posts, study support co-ordinators or flexible learning advisors, to involving librarians in a cross-college information skills project. One study support co-ordinator works alongside a librarian designated as resource-based learning officer on a 50% basis. Other libraries 'bridge the gap' with students by assigning librarians to specialist subject or faculty support.

Such involvement enables libraries to promote flexible learning, support information skills development, enhance dialogue with teaching staff, and provide additional IT support. 'Positive implications' are reported for the use of library resources and the informal development of wider roles for library staff. Elsewhere, the high profile of specialist staff means:

The tremendous help given by non-professional staff goes totally unrecognised. *(Tertiary college)*

Planning, assessing performance, and agreeing levels of service

Featuring the library in the college development plan makes a real difference. Nearly half (45%) comment that the effect ranges from ensuring that expenditure on an automated library system remains a priority, to establishing necessary links between curriculum-focused initiatives and library resourcing. Several respondents make this point:

> *Commitment made to continue improved funding towards objectives of more flexible delivery and academic excellence.* *(Tertiary college)*

> *Explicit need for student support in learning acknowledged – means realistic budgets required. Again senior manager has pushed this forward.* *(Tertiary college)*

The result is greater recognition of the library and its contribution, leading to enhanced resourcing (in accordance with COFHE guidelines). One librarian observes:

> *The mechanism by which strategic plans/work programmes are resourced, based on need, is not clear. As activity-based budgeting is implemented this may become apparent.*

Some respondents see particular benefits in consideration of the library within college plans when funding becomes difficult:

> *It has prevented a significant reduction in library funding although there has been a 10% cut.*

> *Greater commitment to maintain levels of resources (although this year we have suffered a cut along with all other sections).* *(Tertiary college)*

A few colleges report that the library is not just included in the college plan, but a required item for systematic consideration by departments:

> *All curriculum areas have to mention the information centre and how they would like it to develop.* *(VI form college)*

Other college libraries are at an earlier stage in the 'struggle for inclusion':

> *Plans were submitted but not included – external funding, sources of students etc. took precedence.* *(Tertiary college)*

A few respondents feel that inclusion mainly helps maintain the library 'profile' in the college, rather than gain a 'larger share of the cake'.

> *There is a commitment to library resourcing in the strategic plan in a theoretical way.*

> *It helps in clarifying and implementing the LRC mission – it improves staff morale and hence performance.* *(Tertiary college)*

A weary sixth form college librarian summarises the cost/benefit equation as:

> *Much more paperwork and report writing for the librarian. A slight increase in provision.*

A substantial number of libraries are not yet included in their college development plan. One sixth form college librarian admits not knowing whether it is mentioned. This lack of recognition of the library and its potential by the college management must be a matter of concern, if only because of the increasingly close relationship between college inspection, planning and financing.

By contrast, an encouraging number of colleges report that inclusion in the development plan leads to greater recognition of the library role in supporting teaching and learning:

> *The LRC figures prominently in a) support as entitlement for all students b) assisting changing methods of delivery supported ie, self study, distance learning.*

> *Units are aware of the role of the Learning Centre in resource-based learning.*

This leads to 'more involvement in specific course committees'. Inclusion does not always work well:

> *Theoretically, the library should be part of a holistic college approach to learning. In practice, lack of communication means we tend to do our own thing, muddle through!* *(VI form college)*

The introduction and refinement of performance indicators and targets for college libraries is regarded as helpful in focusing the allocation of limited resources in key areas and 'to identify areas which are under-used and improve provision'. Specific examples given are:

- course monitoring elsewhere in the college leading to revised opening hours for the library
- assessment of loan figures per department leading to promotional activity with low-use departments and increased library use
- increased attention to curriculum support as a result of data collected.

Specific gains are reported in some colleges where extra funding was made available to help meet targets:

> *Comparisons with external PIs (LA/COFHE) have resulted in improved budget and advanced plans for alternative accommodation.* *(Tertiary college)*

Elsewhere increased space was obtained as a result of monitoring use:

> *Loss figures justified the acquisition of a Security System* *(VI form college)*

There are, of course, some dangers in providing performance data:

> *The college-wide survey gives a 92% student satisfaction rate: management have set us a target of 93% this year!*

Other less tangible benefits are reported, such as raising senior management's awareness of the demands on library services and, where a college-wide approach to performance indicators operates:

> *LRC staff have access to divisional business plans and are able to pre-empt any necessary changes in provision.* *(Tertiary college)*

A few discordant notes are sounded. One librarian thinks that the quality assurance effort is misplaced:

> *Quality Assurance attempts to quantify the unquantifiable. It takes up too much time which would be spent more profitably working with students.*

Another complains of time consumed by data collection. A tertiary college librarian feels they are not questioned enough about performance and expresses frustration that 'We have to publicise our PIs to be noticed.'

There are widely different views on what is meant by 'systematic self-assessment': from regular staff meetings and staff appraisal systems, through surveys of student opinion, to annual quality review and quality circles. Even so, few college libraries appear to be involved. Most describe the system rather than its effects. Exceptions are:

> *The college does have an appraisal system, but it is very slow, very bureaucratic and the college's lack of money means that its recommendations can rarely be taken up.*

> *Quality reviews have led to changing priorities on spending and services.* *(Tertiary college)*

> *It provides ammunition for asking for funding, if funding is available. This worked up to 1995.*

> *It has resulted in more communication with teaching staff about our role and effectiveness.* *(Tertiary college)*

It enables us to see our limitations and plan accordingly.

(VI form college)

Only 13 respondents (8%) comment on service-level agreements in the context of their work, of whom four have yet to implement them. Most of the agreements cited offer only partial coverage.

Professional support through libraries

A significant number of respondents (39%) provide professional support for teachers through staff libraries and collections of teaching materials, but almost half of these note that they are little used, except by people on Certificate in Education courses, or

Useful for social science, Access, teacher training and interviews.

One librarian concludes:

'I must market these services much more aggressively.

Another more optimistically suggests:

Closer involvement of the library with trainee teachers on Cert. Ed and C & G 730 will hopefully produce more library-oriented lecturers in future!

(Tertiary college)

Others feel that teachers prefer to keep teaching materials to themselves. Only one reports a professional library post devoted to this service:

I believe the high quality service provided does maintain the Learning Resources Service profile with Directors and the Principal.

She names this professional post as one of the two most important features of library support for teaching and learning, adding:

The value of the curriculum services librarian is in the individual support provided around the information needs of the FE curriculum and corporate management issues.

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The staff collection is usually 'the poor relation'. At best, thinking about this aspect of service is unclear:

> *The staff development resource centre is situated in the library. There is considerable ambiguity over responsibilities, accountabilities and funding.*

Elsewhere it is likely to be under-resourced. A tertiary librarian says:

> *We have been asked to highlight a Staff Development section and add resources. Also to publicise materials/courses. No extra hours or money have been forthcoming.* *(Tertiary college)*

Some respondents are much more positive about staff libraries, assessing that their collections are welcomed by teaching staff ('it is seen as necessary from the teaching viewpoint') and predicting:

> *With inspection looming, this area is becoming more important – particularly FEFC Inspection Reports and other FEFC papers.*
> *(VI form college)*

However, another librarian who made the same assumption reports her disillusion:

> *The Staff library was the first to be put on the computer catalogue to promote use as the floodgates of FEFC opened upon us, but there is still little active use of materials.* *(Tertiary college)*

Summary: The library, college management and external and internal change.

Overall, librarians are variably involved in college curriculum management structures and operations:

- Four out of five colleges involve their library/LRC manager on their academic board, curriculum planning committee or equivalent.

- Almost a third have librarians as members of some course teams.
- Nevertheless, fewer than half of respondents feel that their senior management actively supports their curriculum involvement.
- Most library managers are given the chance to comment on the resource implications of new courses at least sometimes.
- However, only a minority (30%) feel that it makes any real difference to their budgets.

This reluctance in some quarters to involve the library fully is probably related to the inadequacy of many college libraries, as reflected in various comments quoted. Despite improved funding after incorporation, libraries now feel the impact of several national changes in further education, including the introduction of GNVQs, more HE provision, and a broadening of the range of students, including more mature and part-time people.

Internally-generated college changes with the greatest impact on libraries are seen as:

- more IT in the library/LRC for library users
- involvement of librarians in college staff development
- inclusion of the library in the college strategic plan
- more IT elsewhere in the college
- convergence of library and other central services (related to several of the above).

All of these are mentioned by over a third of respondents.

Chapter 3

Survival in the changing college

Before my appointment ... the library was unstaffed and barely funded! It could not possibly have got any worse! College librarian

Professional development of library staff

A total of 129 colleges (78%) report that they are trying to enhance the role of professional library staff in supporting teaching and learning through specific skills training or other means. Information technology training predominates, but there is some reference to teaching skills, training in relation to flexible learning and library skills.

Members of the library staff in 80 colleges (48%) are seeking qualifications, ranging from the City and Guilds 737 to the PGCE, Librarianship degrees and Associateship of the Library Association. Various qualifications in computer skills, management and continuing education are being pursued, along with relevant NVQs.

Eighty-five colleges (51%) are attempting to enhance the role of the library staff in supporting teaching and learning by a variety of means, including IT training, library assistants' courses and customer skills training, as well as by involving support staff in college meetings and in induction of students.

Only a few colleges appear to have developed a programme of systematic professional development support for library staff, usually as part of college-wide staff appraisal or Investors in People.

The changing college library in a changing world

Respondents were asked to compare overall performance of the library over one, three and five years. The results are shown in table 3.1:

Table 3.1: The overall performance of the college library

	Over past year		Compared with three years ago		Compared with five years ago	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Improved	119	(72.1)	132	(80.0)	127	(77.0)
Steady rate	24	(14.5)	3	(1.8)	3	(1.8)
Fluctuated	4	(2.4)	3	(1.8)	3	(1.8)
Declined	5	(3.0)	4	(2.4)	4	(2.4)

The overall picture, as viewed by librarians, is remarkably positive given the problems described elsewhere in the questionnaire. Why? The additional comments here suggest what is important for colleges libraries. Most frequently mentioned in positive terms are:

- computerisation of the library or its housekeeping systems
- increased budgets for books and other resources or access to capital funding (each mentioned by 13 respondents)
- new buildings or sites (or the refurbishment of existing libraries, including 'separation from the Reception Area') (11)
- a new and better librarian (9).

The redundancy of the Resource Manager has led to an improved staff morale and increased and improved contact with teaching staff.

The Learning Resource Co-ordinator has more 'clout' than Library staff prior to her appointment.

Other key factors are a supportive senior management team (8), and commitment of library staff (5). Also noted are the influx of CD-ROMs, the impact of incorporation, a more flexible approach to learning, comments by FEFC Inspectors, the influence of HE development on stock and resources, and the development of learning support facilities alongside the library. A person responsible for the last of these comments:

> *Use of the libraries has steadied, as more alternatives become available to students eg nine curriculum workshops, open access facilities for IT (200 machines) open access facilities within faculty provision, so students have more choice. Library usage is holding up exceptionally well in the circumstances* ***and the staff realise that complacency is not an option.***

Other factors mentioned as improving or sustaining services include:

> *Restructuring – which means we are now allied to the curriculum rather than the administration. Politicking – liaising with colleagues inside and outside the organisation. More investment in library materials and equipment post-incorporation.* *(Tertiary college)*

> *The importance in the strategic plan of Resource-based Learning and IT provision; therefore the LRC has a higher profile.*

> *Improved resourcing: more relevant stock, IT facilities linked to the college network, use of multi-media, greater involvement of subject staff in stock selection. Improvements in marketing the library to teaching staff eg presentations.* *(Tertiary college)*

> *The College has invested heavily in the Resource Centre (and by extension, the library) and this is paying off with increased use of IT across the curriculum, a greater range of reference and resource materials, efficient networked delivery systems.* *(VI form college)*

> *More thought has been given to structuring library staff and liaison with teaching staff. This has developed steadily due to low staff turnover and high staff morale.* *(Tertiary college)*

Enhanced user education 'street cred' as we have gained teaching certificates (C & G 730).

We have had to develop new and more flexible resources – study packs, etc. and we have developed new work areas eg quiet study, group study etc.

and, perhaps heralding an increasing trend:

The College finds it cheaper to use us than to employ lecturers.

Some obstacles preventing or limiting improvement are identified:

The key issues are that resourcing for learning materials has continued to decline over a five year period. Staffing has fluctuated, with initial improvements on incorporation subjected to budget cuts last year. The real issue here is the effect of the increase of student numbers on library staff: student ratios. Our sense is that the range of services and how they are offered/delivered has improved but consistent quality delivery is nevertheless affected.

'Transformation' of a traditional library into a learning centre (with a 40 station PC network) in September 1994 was done without any extra resourcing or staffing. Usage increased 250%. Senior management admitted they 'got it wrong'. Staffing has increased slightly (one technician, one facilitator) since Sept. 1995 and we are learning how to cope!

Our performance in certain workroom procedures (getting resources ordered and catalogued and on the shelves) has declined, owing to pressure on staffing the enquiry/issue desk. Stress on staff has created a higher absence rate this year – leading to more absence . . . *(Tertiary college)*

The overall level of resources (to FE course provision) has declined markedly in the last ten years, so that it is difficult to maintain a steady overall improvement in services. *(Tertiary college)*

A few comments reflect on the ambiguities in a highly volatile environment:

> *We offer more services than ever before. We have a bigger budget, and changes in personnel and library management have also helped. However, since incorporation, staff morale has dipped quite considerably.*

> *The staff are working harder. A feeling that a good service is less likely to be chopped.*

Finally, one sixth form college librarian judges the recent performance as much improved, but adds:

> *One long serving member of staff dislikes the move away from the traditional role (custodian of books) and feels that the service has declined (less spending on books, more dealings with IT).*

Obstacles to progress

In considering impediments to the library support for teaching and learning, respondents focus on problems in communicating with teaching staff and on lack of adequate funding, staff numbers and space. The issues mentioned most frequently are listed in table 3.2.

Other comments are about information skills and flexible learning:

> *Lecturing staff use dated teaching methods and do not know what the library has to offer.*

> *We are limited by the ad hoc nature of our information skills contribution.*

> *The rate of growth of flexible learning areas diverts attention from the library.*

> *Students' lack of basic information search skills is a problem.*

Table 3.2: Main impediments to library/LRC support for teaching and learning

		No. of responses	%
1	Lack of involvement with course teams/lecturers *(Bad communication by some academic staff . . . allied to a misconception of the librarian's role, i.e. seen as just support staff – not academic.)* *(Teaching staff reluctance to include learning resource staff as part of course teams or even to tell us what they are working on with their students at any particular time.)* *(Communication of role of learning resources within teaching and learning to teaching staff generally.)*	32	19.4
2	Insufficient funds for library resources	24	14.5
3	Insufficient number of library/LRC staff to meet growing demands	23	13.9
4=	Lack of space *(to allow for a variety of learning environments; 'teaching area needed in the library')*	14	8.5
4=	Lack of time *(especially for planning work with teachers; 'balancing plates in the air')*	14	8.5
6	Absence of college planning in relation to curriculum development *(There is a lack of strategic vision to curriculum planning which means our potential contribution is not put into a meaningful context . . .)* *(It still feels interim.)* *(Management's lack of recognition of the distinction between IT information sources and IT applications . . . means that funding/management of development is haphazard and not logical.)*	6	3.6
7	Inadequate IT equipment for students *(The IT support level for the library is outside the control of the library staff: ensuring an adequate proportion of IT provision for the library is a serious challenge.)*	5	3.0
8	Low status of library staff *(demotion following amalgamation; low pay creating apathy – 'why put in so much effort and so many extra hours for poor pay?'; librarian kept in acting role)*	4	2.4

There are also problems in the related area of IT skills:

> *IT resources are not being upgraded as necessary eg we require a new network server to increase CD-ROM provision.*

> *There is a lack of IT knowledge among some teaching staff.*

A few other issues are mentioned. One librarian is concerned about health matters:

> *Poor health caused by the building and sickness due to stress resulting from the complex and frustrating library situation.*

Two others describe situations they inherited:

> *A historically underfunded and passive role for the library.*

> *Working in an area [an agricultural college] where many students don't appreciate what libraries can offer; they prefer practical work to academic. This is changing as we offer more higher-level courses.*

Librarians and teachers on effectiveness

Supporting teaching and learning through libraries

Respondents were to name the two most important features of library support for teaching and learning. There are many variations on some key issues, and a few unclassifiable comments.

Library staff

The positive qualities of the library staff are singled out by many people (44%) as one of the two main features of support for teaching and learning. Many use terms such as 'supportive', 'enthusiastic', 'professional', 'committed', 'approachable' and 'warm'.

Clearly, good relationships with students and staff are important in any college library. Determined pursuit of good relations is central to the first model of intervention described in Chapter 4. Even so, it has to be asked whether 'warm fuzzies' (to use a police trainer's description of generalised 'nice' behaviour in professional settings) are enough to ensure the library's active involvement in the curriculum, particularly when these qualities are linked to a comprehensive range of services. How realistic is it for librarians to be 'all things to all people' in a college, especially when the ratio of students to librarians may be several hundred to one?

Our concern here is that in an increasingly difficult and volatile economic environment, good personal relationships and the ability to respond positively to individual enquiries may not be enough. A focus on the specific skills needed to intervene effectively in supporting learning becomes ever more important in defining what amounts to a new professional identity for the next century.

A small number of respondents refer to aspects of the learning support role, citing 'library staff developing the skills to teach students how to learn' or 'understanding of education and training and identifying specific qualifications obtained to equip people for proactive work'.

Deploying resources

Adequate finance, IT and other resources are mentioned in one-third of the replies, with emphasis on appropriate provision and matching stock to the curriculum:

> *Providing relevant resources ensures use of the library which in turn leads to greater support from management.* *(VI form college)*

Key dimensions of resourcing are identified as:

- flexibility in allocation and redeployment, for example by redesignating lending material as reference-only, or vice versa, or by varying loan periods to increase the rate of recycling among a group of users

- differentiation of provision to meet the full range of requirements from foundation courses to HE
- relevance, achieved by involving teaching staff in stock selection, either informally or by allocating funds to departments
- effective organisation, involving 'prompt selection, efficient acquisition and processing, and high quality catalogue access'
- liaison with teaching staff to ensure assignments set do not overstretch resources, or additional resources are made available ahead of demand.

Liaison with teaching staff

Perhaps surprisingly, few respondents identify communication with teaching staff as one of two most important features of library support for teaching and learning. Only 30 people (18%) cite collaboration over course design, preparing learning materials and organising resources for assignments or involvement in curriculum decisions and development. Reference is made to the positive effects of having teaching staff in the library to support student learning and to subject librarians improving links to teaching departments and providing 'knowledge of available resources to support teaching and learning in any subject at any level'.

Working with individual students

Providing an enquiry service of individual help for students is a priority for 29 respondents (17%). Given escalating pressures on many college libraries, and the additional demands created by GNVQ students, HE students and mature students, for example, it becomes a pertinent question whether this approach is sustainable.

Several librarians describe approaches to student support that target particular groups, such as students with language problems or adults daunted by information technology.

Group teaching of information and IT skills

Teaching and preparation of study guidance and support for students in developing information skills, and the provision of IT training for staff and students, together evoked 16 'votes' from respondents. Reported activities range from extended timetabled induction sessions to more ambitious programmes built on:

> *collaboration with Media Resources colleagues (within LRS) and teachers in planning curriculum delivery especially around core skills delivery. This is supported by planned implementation through a staff development programme of a conceptually-based model for information/research skills. We also have a project this year for developing in-house software to be used for supported self study on research skills.*

Attention is focused upon:

> *students learning more about how to make best use of resources*

and success depends on:

> *Emphasis by teaching staff that students' own learning is an integral part of their course*

as well as library staff commitment to helping learners get the resources and information they want

> *and the availability of a wide range of learning support in IT centres and learning centres or in the library.*

Only six people mention college senior management as one of their two important features, perhaps suggesting that SMTs have been preoccupied since incorporation with immediate issues of survival and growth, and that librarians have been operating tactically rather than strategically in seeking to support teaching and learning.

Comments in interviews

During visits to colleges, librarians were asked what they would particularly want in a new library. Besides adequate and suitable space and resources, respondents emphasised:

> *Collaborative staffing. Success is not to do with money and resources . . . we need to build up teams with different expertise to support students in learning centres.*
>
> *Communication links with staff.*
>
> *Developing awareness amongst teaching staff of the full range of skills of the librarian – raising the profile of librarians and their contribution.*
>
> *Mechanisms and facilities to draw people in, such as good layout and signing; access to multi-media resources; additional support; and links to the resources of other institutions.*
>
> *Responsive staff who are team players.*

Looking for causes

The questionnaire results were analysed in detail to determine whether there were any simple correlations among the main groups of responses. For example, does high expenditure per student lead to higher involvement in curriculum intervention by the library? To this end, the responding colleges were grouped into five categories by size (expressed in full-time equivalent FE student numbers and in total library staff numbers) and these groupings were assessed in turn according to:

- the extent of curriculum intervention (using the weighted scores reported earlier, again grouped into five categories)
- the level of involvement in college curriculum management mechanisms (based arbitrarily on the number of positive responses to the relevant five questions: 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 7 and 8.1)

- commitment to professional development of library staff (again based arbitrarily on an assessment of the level of activity reported in questions 12, 12.1 and 12.2)
- respondents' assessments of the library's overall performance.

Such simple correlations would have strongly suggested directions for enhancing college libraries' active involvement in supporting teaching and learning. Unfortunately, the only consistent positive relationship found is between high involvement in curriculum management and extensive professional development in larger colleges (more than 2,001 full-time equivalent FE students).

Further refinement of the categories to allow for significant influences (number of library sites operating, opening hours, length of time in post of the person managing the library, expenditure on library resources for the past five years, college subject specialisms, capital expenditure by the college, and average time in post of senior managers) might reveal a clearer picture, but is beyond this study. In any case, such analysis could not take into account a number of potentially important qualitative factors, such as the college's history of managing change, predominant management style and morale of the teaching staff, library staff and students, or the range and quality of courses offered.

Again, we are unable to detect consistent differences between sixth form, tertiary and other FE colleges surveyed. There are obvious differences in scale of resourcing, reflecting the small size of many sixth form colleges and large size of some tertiary colleges. Differences in approach between sixth form colleges and 'the rest' are reflected in some of the more detailed comments. It is clear that many of the former are 'catching up' after incorporation, by expanding the library, increasing staff and penetrating management processes. At least one model described in Chapter 4 is strongly associated with sixth form colleges in this situation.

The views of teachers

O brave new world

Teachers and curriculum managers who were interviewed offer another set of views on what constitutes library effectiveness in supporting teaching and learning. Not surprisingly, senior curriculum managers tend to view library provision as part of the panoply of support of their move towards resource-based learning, which one vice-principal characterises as:

> *. . . Interactive learning using machines. This is a very powerful approach to teaching and learning but we mustn't lose sight of the human dimension . . . the tutor concept is vital. . . electronic learning still requires a student.*

Another curriculum manager projects a fairly limited view of the scope of the library:

> *I don't think IT will ever replace books – the library is quite important. Nowadays students are required to do complex assignments – going into the library environment is crucial.*

In some colleges the senior management team structure and lines of communication are seen as critical to effectiveness:

> *The library is part of the curriculum structure and not the support structure. This could provide access to curriculum money.*

A senior curriculum manager emphasises teamwork:

> *Learning support teams are vital to the success of the library; academic staff ebbing and flowing in the library, working with library staff.*

Although everyone sees the library as 'a good thing', levels of response vary. Some teachers see it as integral to their teaching and making a huge difference; others have a limited view of the library. These differences are reflected in their views on effectiveness of library support:

We are more dependent on the LRC to deliver what we can't and to provide technical publications.

We need the libraries to provide support and guidance to students working through learning packages. They are especially important to less motivated students and to those having difficulties in understanding resources.

A quiet space for students to learn in – this is vital for our students who have no access to it at home.

and on the library contribution to teaching and learning by:

- supporting staff
  - allowing them to take CD-ROMs home to update workbooks for students
  - getting material for staff pursuing higher degrees
- supporting students
  - providing class sets of books; journals; and expensive CD-ROMs

Elsewhere the advances in technology are seen as extending the scope of the library:

Our university is putting courses onto the system – and we are looking to extend this, tackling the library shortfall [for HE student support] electronically – hooking up our library to other libraries, giving access to real material not just catalogues.

This person describes the college library as:

Probably the most important thing; absolutely essential. It contributes quality in what we provide. Students can't study in dustbins, they need real materials. We try to teach them how to study and how to make use of the library.

The college without a library

Teachers are unanimous that it would make a real difference to their teaching if they had no library to call upon. Two versions of life without libraries give a flavour of many of the replies:

> *We wouldn't have a vast range of back-up materials for our students – videotapes, periodicals (which are used by the staff a lot). Our department [in an annexe] has a teaching room that is not timetabled and is used for private study, so there would still be a place for our students to study, but we would have to design assignments that were less dependent on the printed word and that would be a real loss.*
>
> *[Head of Department]*

> *It would make a huge and fundamental difference to my teaching. We could deliver some of what we do but 50% would have to be revised or amended. Core lecture programmes could continue but valuable assignments and research skills development would go. It would be impossible to retain the quality of what we do. [Curriculum manager]*

The important bits

Answers about the most important elements of a new library tend to highlight very basic elements of the service. Recurring items are:

- accessibility and a central location
- space for different activities including quiet study
- 'an even more greatly enhanced book stock'
- 'a range of IT and other resources' although two people point to the danger of students 'seeing the CD-ROM as everything'.

Summary: survival in the changing college

'Doing well but could do better despite all the odds' summarises the views on coping with the changing world of college libraries:

- Four out of five respondents feel they have at least maintained a steady state in the past year after previous improvement.
- Progress is credited to computerised library housekeeping with greater efficiency, better budgets, new or refurbished buildings, and dynamic new librarians, among other factors.
- The main obstacles to development are problems in communicating with lecturers, insufficient library staff and funds, and lack of space and time to do the work well.
- Respondents identify the main features underpinning library support for teaching and learning as:
  - good staff
  - effective use of resources
  - good liaison with teaching staff
  - effective work with individual students
  - IT training for staff and students.
- No simple relationships are found between levels of library staff or student numbers, on the one hand, and clusters of replies about curriculum interventions, involvement in curriculum management, professional development, or the overall assessment of performance, on the other.

In other words, there are no simple answers for a college wishing to ensure that its library is actively involved in supporting teaching and learning, because a number of more subtle and complex factors are likely to influence success.

Several of these issues were investigated more closely during visits to colleges. Characteristics generalised from the visits, seminars and numerous questionnaire comments, inspired some preliminary models of library support for teaching and learning in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Towards effectiveness

Resource-based learning? Gee-whiz thinking – 'computers will solve all our problems'. – *College librarian*

The effective college library: five models

A particularly interesting presentation at the 1995 NATFHE Library Section Conference looked at future roles for learning resource departments. Patsy Cullen, Librarian at Bretton Hall College (University of Leeds) outlined four proactive roles which emphasise, respectively:

- acting as a focus for development of new approaches to teaching and learning, and management of teaching and learning in the institution
- operating as an equal partner with academic departments and professional development units
- supporting development led by academic departments
- responding to the demands created by teaching and learning developments.

This is broadly similar to the four-stage model developed as part of the *Effective School Library* research project.[10]

There is an inherent difficulty in trying to model library strategies for active involvement in supporting teaching and learning. As noted, the relatively poor state of college libraries on incorporation has been reported by the FEFC Inspectorate and others. Most college libraries have little spare capacity, beyond the basics: obtaining and organising resources, staffing the library and responding to immediate requests for help. Even with additional staff and resources to enable more active involvement, there are innate barriers imposed by limited size and often high levels of use of the basic services. Most of the models presented below are likely, therefore, to be applied as 'extension activities' rather than as a core method of working in all but the best resourced colleges.

We have assumed that all college libraries provide a range of basic services to underpin college teaching and learning:

- a range of resources and access to them
- limited induction of new students
- professional support in the library.

The models focus on particular approaches adopted in seeking to contribute more actively in particular areas. They are based on the premise that college library staff have limited energy and cannot attempt everything, so that prioritisation becomes the issue.

A useful point made at the NATFHE Conference discussion of the Cullen models was that, although librarians could legitimately adopt different approaches to 'intervention in the curriculum', it was not professionally acceptable to end up involved in particular ways accidentally, without having thought through the consequences.

Each model outlined below is based on one or more of the colleges visited, which were in turn selected as exemplars of particular approaches to supporting teaching and learning. The main elements have been stripped of contextual detail to clarify the essentials of each approach. Some of these models are an amalgam of several colleges, and particular features may not appear in every college to which a model applies. A list of the colleges visited is presented in appendix 2.

Model A: Non-convergent resource provision

I run the library like a restaurant: the students and staff are customers.

The mission

The essence of this model is responsiveness to student and staff needs by 'team players' with very good interpersonal skills. A central task is to act as custodian and exploiter of a wide range of resources through talking to staff and high accessibility to staff and students.

Paradoxically, although this approach can be compared to a very good traditional library service, it is achieved by 'jettisoning some of the cherished ideas of college librarianship' (according to one exponent).

Location and staffing

In this model, the library is likely to be adjacent to, or share space with, the main IT resource centre or learning support service, but operated separately. The intention is to offer a 'seamless' range of services to the student. The approach requires adequate staffing (eg, five professional librarians and six support staff). It may depend upon paying students to shelve books and keep the library open in the evenings and at weekends. Regular library staff training is provided in short sessions, mainly on the use of CD-ROMs and the Internet, but ranging from implications for the library of students' cultural differences to the use of reference books.

It is important that the library is carefully positioned within the college management structure. It is desirable for the service to be part of a curricular or delivery faculty, rather than a support services arm of the college (literally 'out on a limb').

Core activities

There is a very strong focus on supplying what people want and ensuring that stock is used. To this end, librarians attend all faculty and

programme boards to 'find out what's coming up and what's going on'. The process of finding out what people want and monitoring demand is

> *based on very good relationships not mechanical processes and the Librarian values user complaints because they help to improve the service.*

Time spent by librarians in the college/staff lounge is seen as an invaluable part of the process.

Library staff are strongly encouraged to find ways to respond to particular problems and to be as flexible as possible in delivering services. Any tendency to complain about shortcomings in the teaching staff and how they use (or don't use) the library is curbed, because:

> *You don't antagonise the teaching staff; we need their repeat business.*

The heavy service focus is reinforced in published performance indicators concerned with:

- limiting waiting time at the library counter
- promising courteous and professional treatment
- guaranteeing availability of professional advice and help
- maintaining an acceptable working environment for users
- making new stock available quickly.

Use of facilities

Provision is based on equal co-existence, not convergence of services. Student users move easily between the library and physically adjacent services. Open learning centres elsewhere in the college are offered specific library services, such as stock purchase, but library staff are not directly involved in these or the adjacent services. The (substantial) library space consists of a quiet area for study purposes (seen as important), and a general area with tables for assignment and group work. There are unlikely to be teaching rooms attached to the library. The library is used heavily for dissertations and assignments; word

processing, binding and copying facilities are all readily available but not under single management control.

The usual range of resources is on offer, with a growing number of CD-ROM players to supplement a heavily-used book stock, including sets of textbooks (part of responsiveness – 'students don't have the money'), project boxes assembled at teachers' requests, a strong collection of journals ('very important'), and videos available on loan. The stock is likely to be considerably enriched by HE provision. No charges are made for inter-library loans. Internet access is actively being considered.

Library stock is managed flexibly in response to change, with new resources acquired for GNVQ students and redesignation of stock from reference to short-term loan as required.

Two features of the main exemplar of this model are:

- specialist collections reflecting college specialisms which led to recognition of the library as a national centre in these areas
- willingness to spend substantially on resources to meet demands, for example, a CD-ROM of market research information, costing £3,000, and, at the other extreme, materials bought from the Caribbean to help one student.

Curriculum interventions

Direct involvement by the librarians in teaching and learning is confined to brief library induction of new staff and students, and contributions to research skills courses run by one faculty.

Key factors

- This approach to service enables the library to play to its traditional strengths in a dynamic way.
- It is not based upon finding time to extend the repertoire of librarian involvement, but on 'sticking with the knitting' (a phrase coined by Peters and Waterman[11] to describe how the

'excellent companies' they studied refused to be distracted from doing their core tasks well).

- If library staff are fully committed to and engaged in this approach it becomes what Rosabeth Moss Kanter called 'a self-reinforcing upward cycle [of] performance – stimulating pride – stimulating performance.'[12]
- Recognition by senior management and teaching departments of the importance of the library's contribution to supporting the activities of the college is a vital ingredient of this approach.
- If this contribution is fully recognised, adequate resources can be secured to continue the effort.
- If not, there is likely to be a tendency to invest in 'newer' and 'sexier' cross-curricular initiatives such as the IT Centre or Open Learning Centres, at the expense of the library.
- This can rapidly lead to a spiral of decline and to marginalisation of the library and its services.

Model B: Opportunistic intervention

With incorporation I became a Co-ordinator of Learning Resources, my salary was increased and I was deemed 'sort of middle management'.

The mission

This is a proselytising mission, in which the librarian seeks to persuade senior management and teaching staff what can be achieved through an effective library (seen only as 'a good thing'). The librarian is likely to be faced with a history of neglect of the library or toleration of limited service. The library may be in a sixth form college which has made an effort to improve the service following incorporation, by providing additional space and funds and appointing a professional librarian. This model may occur elsewhere, when a traditional librarian, offering a low-key custodial service, is replaced by a more proactive person.

The essence of the approach is to communicate a vision of what can be achieved through collaborative working to teaching colleagues, who have never experienced an effective college library, and may regard the librarian as support staff rather than a professional colleague. One librarian visited was a GNVQ Internal Verifier, staff governor and union representative, all in hope of being seen as a professional colleague.

Location and staffing

The library's location may not be ideal for current requirements. It is unlikely to be large enough for simultaneous private study, group work and (noisy) computer use. Allocation of additional space may cause supervision problems if the new area is not visible from the main service point. Supervision is likely to degenerate into crowd control at times.

Lack of staff can be an inhibiting factor, with only part-time clerical support and possibly a term-only contract for the librarian. Since a probable college priority is to have someone in charge of the library whenever it is open (partly to reduce theft) the librarian's options are to settle for the role of library custodian with minimal teacher contact, or to close the library at times to undertake joint planning of assignments or delivery of research skills input to courses elsewhere in the college.

The librarian is likely to report to the central resources manager, rather than be part of a teaching faculty, and will be left to decide what to do unless a crisis arises or major expenditure is needed.

The librarian's first major battleground will be to secure enough staff cover to make it possible to spend time away from the library, to commit some time to meet with course teams, work with students in classrooms, collaborate with teaching staff or prepare materials.

Core activities

The librarian is expected to deliver an adequate traditional library service and be responsive to student demands, but without the involvement in curriculum planning which would give some notice of these

demands. Performance indicators will measure use of library services to justify expenditure to senior management. The librarian's attempts to involve teaching staff in decisions about purchasing books and materials in their subjects will succeed only sporadically, even if budgets are allocated to departments based on student numbers and use.

Use of facilities

There will probably be mini-libraries all over the college; the librarian may have to offer to catalogue them to begin to impose some control.

The library space will be fully occupied for much of the day but many students will bring in their own materials or use computers for word processing assignments. There is likely to be heavy demand for CD-ROMs, with equipment fully booked at peak periods and demand exceeding supply. Pressure may be brought to bear by IT staff for transfer of CD-ROMs to their domain.

Establishment of learning centres elsewhere in the college may reduce the pressure on computers. However, decisions about library, IT and learning centre space may be taken on the basis of expediency rather than optimum use, leading to apparently arbitrary division or regrouping of resources.

Curriculum interventions

The librarian's other main battleground is to gain recognition from teachers as a fellow professional. This may lead to further frustration about status differences between teaching staff and the librarian, who may be viewed as support staff. Similarly, at this phase of relationships, the librarian is likely to rate teaching staff primarily in terms of their use of the library or encouragement of student use. A danger here is that librarians may develop a negative attitude towards teachers because of their apparent tendency to dump students in the library, set impossible library assignments without reference to the library staff, and expect librarians to conjure complex information from nowhere.

Once these two major battles have been won, or at least a tactical advantage achieved, the librarian may apply the more systematic strategy outlined in Model C.

In the meantime, the librarian will concentrate on 'Looking for friends': building alliances with teachers who show an interest in the library. This can take many forms, from purchasing materials following discussion about an assignment, to preparing guidance on library research skills for particular groups of students. Occasionally co-operation may be more active and involve preparing and delivering joint library assignments ('very much doing what the teachers want') or working with students on 'how to get credit for sources tried'. Library staff constraints may, however, limit this type of intervention. The approach to students is pragmatic:

> *I ask them 'where would you look for information.' If they don't come up with more than five sources I drop the whole thing down two notches.*

If staffing is improved, the librarian may prefer to stick with this model rather than a more strategic approach. If so, the priorities may become more work with students in the lower ability range, focused on using encyclopaedias and obtaining information efficiently, and 'more *ad hoc* lessons' in classrooms or the library.

Key factors

- The approach depends almost entirely on the librarian as prime mover, even if senior management is notionally supportive.
- Its strength is that if the librarian makes progress, it will be with a strong feeling of achievement and recognition of worth.
- However, each advance will be a battle won. Any ground secured may be arbitrarily lost later. One librarian visited was a veteran of three college restructurings, in each of which she had been displaced from the curriculum management team, leading each time to a new campaign to regain the position.

There are two dangers:

- By the time librarians gain recognition and the scope to operate, they may be too exhausted to 'rise above the battle'.
- The time spent on gaining this position may be at the expense of professional development needed to equip the librarians for more active curriculum support when the chance comes, especially if attendance at external seminars or training events has not been possible because of lack of staff cover.

Model C: Strategic intervention

At this moment I see the library as a burden. — *College principal*

The mission

Its basis is recognition that the college's core activities are teaching and learning, and that anything judged not central to these activities is shunted to the peripliery, where the prevalent set of college values is based on efficiency rather than effectiveness. This translates into senior management decisions based on 'How little can I spend on maintaining an adequate library?' rather than recognition that the library is part of the essential underpinning of progress, particularly towards 'flexible learning'.

This mission requires librarians to ensure they are involved in the major developments affecting the college, and to turn potential threats into challenges. Rapid deployment of IT and widespread investment in open learning centres can both lead to the library being sidelined, but there is enough scope here for librarians to be actively and centrally involved.

Location and staffing

The library may be a distinct entity in the college, or a key element of the learning resource centre. Staffing is likely to be adequate for an efficient service. Any differences in staff specialisms depend upon the services

provided (degree of integration of the library with other services). Library staff are encouraged to develop good links with teaching departments and individual staff.

Core activities

The core activities for the librarian (who may have overall managerial responsibility for the library or report to a senior manager who spans college resourcing areas) are defined by college priorities and preoccupations. The main elements in the library development plan mirror the core tasks in the college development plan, where the library contribution is featured in each section. Similarly, performance indicators and targets for the library are cast in college priority terms and seek to make the library contribution to college development explicit. There is likely to be a strong emphasis on planning, linked to the college development plan, and driven by performance indicators and targets. One LRC Manager specifically arranged for the library to be viewed by the college evaluation team to raise its profile and demonstrate 'value for money'.

Library staff are likely to be involved in any area of college activity seen as important, such as validation of new courses or franchising activities. The intention is to ensure that the library maintains a high profile – 'a presence all over the college'.

Use of facilities

The library is likely to have a reasonable amount of space, and a well developed collection with a good balance of books, journals and other learning materials. The library service may have been converged with other services. If not, it is likely to be moving in this direction.

Curriculum intervention

A key part of the strategy is for librarians to ensure that they are represented on the college-wide curriculum management board or its equivalent. One librarian who was not yet ready for this move said:

I have to be assertive or aggressive. When the computer system is up and running I'd like to get on the curriculum board and find out what support could be given to students . . . user education is even more important than [hesitates] the books.

Librarians who have adopted the strategic intervention strategy are well past this stage. They have established their place on the college curriculum board and feel free to contribute on any aspect of curriculum planning, not just on immediate resource implications. They are also alert to other pan-college or faculty meetings that may be significant in a volatile world and, if necessary, attend uninvited to ensure that they are involved. (As one 'case study' librarian put it 'I do not see myself in the library looking after books.')

In deciding what specific initiatives to support, the librarian will be guided by three principles:

- It is better to link resources, energy and commitment to other college staff who are energetic and enthusiastic than, for example, to target a department simply because you have not worked there before. This approach is enshrined in Michael Fullan's maxim 'Go where the energy is.'[13]
- The first few initiatives should be achieved within a manageable time-period and have reasonable prospect of visible success (sometimes described in educational change literature as achieving early concrete practice).
- Early initiatives should give the librarian the chance to demonstrate competence beyond the limited stereotyped view of 'what librarians do'.

Key factors

This is a risky strategy, because there is a fine line between being seen as a committed enthusiast with a significant professional expertise to contribute, and being regarded as an empire-builder muscling in on areas about which you know nothing. This difficulty is compounded by

the anxiety about change and lack of job security experienced by many teachers. In this situation, open advocates of flexible learning, increased use of IT, or other measures favoured by college senior management, are likely to be viewed with suspicion or to meet outright hostility. However, if the approach is undertaken with sensitivity, librarians can be seen as a major support to teaching staff in difficult times.

Care must be exercised to ensure that changes supported are really central to the current concerns of the college. One librarian who misinterpreted initial college interest in flexible learning as real commitment, and chaired the working party set up to make recommendations, was disappointed by the lack of response. She was even more galled to find out three years later that a new task group had been set up to introduce 'flexible learning' through open learning centres without her involvement.

Model D: Promoting resource-based learning

> *Have some people misconceived what learning with technology is really about?* – *Senior curriculum manager*

The mission

Two more or less distinct approaches to resource-based learning can be detected. Some colleges began a few years ago to provide systematic support for student-centred learning. This was part of an overall strategy to offer a range of routes to a more diverse community of students, often in response to the introduction of BTEC courses. In her study of learning centres, Valerie Bigford[14] noted the variety possible within one college with a learner-orientated approach to course delivery.

> *Each of the centres has a different character depending on the kind of students that have adopted it. The range of centres offers a wide choice of learning environments. Levels of staffing differ, so do opening hours and types of resources stocked. Some are physically more suited to*

groupwork, others to individual private study and research. Some centres are comprised of a suite of rooms fulfilling different functions, others are open plan with lots of activities taking place together.

It is what takes place in these centres that differentiates them from a traditional library. Physically, some of the centres may have the appearance of a library but the learning activities might shock the traditionalists.

The pattern of evolution in many colleges has been from 'open learning drop-in centres' to centres supporting the 'flexible learning' elements of teaching programmes. According to David Bosworth,[15] open learning centres were a response to the perceived need to make maximum use of expensive audio-visual equipment bought by the college.

These systems have matured so that there is now a clear relationship between library service and learning centre functions. In some cases, this has resulted in overlapping staffing and provision of library resources in the centres. In a few instances, the entire operation is managed by a librarian, usually in the role of Learning Resources Manager.

More recently, pressures of student numbers and reduced taught hours have led to IT-dominated learning centres featuring banks of computers. Some of these are entirely separate – both physically and managerially – from the library. Elsewhere, centres are located next to the library, or the library has been transformed into a learning centre, and the librarians' role described by one lecturer as 'purely a policing function'. Where such development takes place without careful consideration of the library role, tensions are inevitably created.

Location and staffing

In the 'learning-led' versions of this model, it is likely that the library occupies substantial space in a central position in the college and that the original open learning drop-in centre is located nearby. Other learning centres may be located at any convenient point in the college, depending

on availability of rooms large enough to accommodate up to three classes at once, which can be supervised relatively easily from a strategic point. Smaller centres are positioned primarily for convenience of access by specific departments or faculties. It has been suggested that such centres are the nearest that FE colleges come towards providing 'home-base' rooms on the secondary classroom model.

Overall staffing levels of learning resources are likely to be high, as they represent a major commitment. One large college studied employs 53 staff in the library, IT, materials production, reprographics and six learning centres (variously staffed by teachers or librarians as learning support staff) within the learning resources domain. The total excludes teaching staff who use the centres with their students. In the same college, the main IT open centre run by the IT manager houses the main library collection of CDs and audio-visual materials. This 'branch library' is staffed by a librarian who also helps students locate information beyond immediate word processing or Internet needs.

There is a strong emphasis on team working and collaborative staffing, since different staff are needed to meet different needs. However, students are likely to approach anyone for help and the exhortation to 'think service' will be inculcated in all staff.

In the 'finance-driven' version of the model, centres are likely to be developed independently of the library unless library space is taken over. Using the library space may be problematic, because an invasion of terminals is likely to drive out students seeking a quiet working environment, and the space requirements for a library are different from those of an IT centre where ease of supervision is at a premium.

Staffing of learning centres is likely to be a dominant issue in both versions of this model, and one which may encourage convergence. David Bosworth[15] envisages college managers asking:

> *'Who already has staff on duty who can deal with callers?' The answer – the library. Many of the open learning units found themselves drawn towards the library – for staffing when teaching staff were not*

available, for the cataloguing and the general 'library management' skills of librarians and for the space to store the varied software – books, journals, open learning packages and, increasingly, the electronic devices and their software.

Librarians have added storage and retrieval techniques to their repertoire of skills – how best to organise the new breed of teaching packages (with their mixture of books, video and audio cassettes, worksheets and anything else the innovative designers can come up with).

In one 'case study' library, which had been metamorphosed in response to student numbers and reduced teaching hours, use increased dramatically. Library staff were forced to cut back on curriculum meetings and interaction with teaching staff because they had to staff a space which was not designed with this form of supervision in mind.

Core activities

In the 'learning-led' version, whole classes are likely to use the learning centres in a form of 'independent supervised working'. Learning supervisors may be teaching staff or librarians trained as learning facilitators. Collaborative working by all such staff is vital to success in this model. Students work through learning packages (5,000 in one college), some self-contained but others requiring reference to books or other materials provided by the library. The packages may be available as software or print. Alternatively, the library may house a collection of learning packages (3,000 in one case) which teaching staff order in multiples. In this case, LRC staff are less likely to be involved in design of materials and direct support of activities.

Attention is given to students' ability to work alone with the packages, freeing staff to carry out literacy or numeracy assessment. Additional learning support is provided if required. Students work at their own pace, with support from the learning supervisors when necessary. Teachers may introduce assignments or review progress in small teaching rooms nearby. This approach may become 'over-instrumental'

even when accompanied by normal teaching, and some teachers seek to stretch students through more open-ended library assignments as an adjunct to these programmes. Networked access to a wide variety of resources (which sometimes entails heavy investment in, for example, licensing arrangements) is important in driving this approach.

In the 'finance-driven' version of the model, heavy emphasis is placed on using information technology to support learning. Unfortunately there appears to be a substantial gap between college needs for IT-based learning packages at all levels and their general availability. Worse, the problems of supporting students through this type of learning programme appear to have been underestimated. This tends to result in librarians being drawn into types of IT support for which they are not trained. Although Internet access to a range of information sources is sometimes heralded as an exciting dawn, it may exacerbate the situation.

This type of information use places great emphasis on the student's ability to search logically and systematically, select and reject rationally and synthesise the results, all of which are skills which cannot be taken for granted and which many students need to develop further.

Use of facilities

In the 'learning-led' version, IT developments elsewhere in the college are likely to reduce pressure on library facilities for word processing. However, there needs to be some stimulus to increase use of library services as students gain confidence obtaining and using information. Where learning packages are self-contained, as in many basic competence-driven courses, this may lead to some reduction in use of the library. It is questionable whether some of these students would have made significant use of the library as part of an entirely taught course.

The extent and level of resourcing of the learning centres will vary according to types of use. One college visited has developed eight centres, six overseen by the Learning Resources Director, who is also responsible for the library, some managed by chartered librarians and

others by teachers. All of these centres are large, but do not offer uniform provision. The centre serving the Engineering and Built Environment faculty provides craft and technician students with:

> *a large collection of learning packages created by the teaching staff [with remission hours made available for this purpose] which are readily available for use by the students. It has computers, drawing board facilities and an associated classroom and Lecture Theatre.*

By contrast, the mathematics workshops (used by most faculties):

> *includes a wide range of mathematics books, Bradford Maths and Kent Maths schemes, computers, videos and similar support material. There is a small room within the Workshop for tutorials and for showing videos.*

Support services are likely to be fully integrated. Reprographic and binding services will be regarded as front-line student services.

In the 'finance-driven' version, the effect on the library is likely to depend on where learning centres are based. If they are separate from the library there is likely to be a reduction in pressure on library IT facilities, and attempts to relocate some library resources (eg, CD-ROMs) unless they are available on college-wide networks. The library will be faced with increased difficulty in ensuring its share of college resources because of the expense of setting up and operating the learning centres. An adjacent learning centre, especially if it is the main IT open-access centre, will increase pressure on all library resources and facilities. If library space is taken up for learning centre purposes, library facilities may be swamped by students word processing assignments.

Curriculum interventions

The 'learning-based' version of the model carries a number of problems for library intervention to support this learning process. The 'finance-led' version is itself problematic as a means of delivering the curriculum, according to the librarians and several lecturers interviewed.

There are three problem areas in the 'learning-based' version:

- the precise role of library services staff in supporting these centres
- problems particular to the materials used
- ambiguity about the role of librarians in helping students develop skills in obtaining, sifting and using information.

College librarians have battled for years to discourage departments from creating inefficient mini-libraries. Effective support for new learning centres may entail setting up 'branch' libraries. This should not be undertaken simply for instant gratification for the student. Robert Powell[16] expressed the issue very clearly from a teaching and learning perspective:

> *It has been argued that if resources are held centrally students will quickly acquire information as they search for the resources they need.*
>
> *There is some truth in this, but there are also dangers. If the objectives of a particular assignment are to develop the skills of searching for appropriate resources then the approach of sending students to the resource centre is sound. If the assignment is completely open-ended and the teacher wants them to make use of as wide a variety of sources as possible, then a visit to the resource centre is sensible.*
>
> *On the other hand if the objectives of an assignment are to develop the skills of synthesis, analysis, or interpretation of data, then the act of sending students to collect the resources is an unnecessary and time-consuming activity. In this case the student needs the resources at hand and there is a strong case, therefore, for the classroom resource base. [p 102]*

Since many learning centres depend on materials produced by teachers and available in multiple copies at the centre, there is an argument about whether the library has a role beyond purchasing. One college's compromise is to keep display sets of materials in the library. There may also be a role for the librarian in reviewing materials in terms of information skills development, assuming a review process is in place.

As already noted, the more open-ended elements of learning centre work, especially those involving IT, put a premium on certain information handling skills, raising the question of whether librarians still have a role in this area. If so, how should the librarian's role be co-ordinated with that of learning centre supervisors and subject teachers?

Leaving aside the IT skills required of students, which are to some extent being addressed, the 'finance-driven' version of the model begs substantial questions about:

- students' information handling skills and the ability of colleges to help develop them systematically
- availability of suitable IT resources pitched at appropriate levels
- the extent to which IT is seen as solving rather than contributing to student difficulties.

The approach also raises larger questions: should further education be defined only in terms of 'achieving' specific competencies? And how does such a limited view relate to the broader educational goals of further and higher education? Pursuing this question further, there must be doubt about whether a college library is necessary or even desirable within an operation which focuses on maximum numbers, minimum taught hours, achieving specific competence levels and assembling evidence of completion.

Key factors

- A key question here is whether there is a role for the library in directly supporting learning centres, and if so what this role entails beyond acting as storekeeper for learning packages.
- The next issue is whether the college values depth and breadth of learning opportunity for all students sufficiently to warrant continued support at acceptable levels for the library alongside learning centre and IT commitments.

- Colleges that elected to adopt this broad approach a few years ago appear to have resolved any difficulties and manage this development through a convergent approach based on team working.
- However, some resistance to the use of 'support staff' in 'teaching' roles is likely to have been encountered from teaching staff.
- If a college elects to go down a learning centre route, there is a need to bring large numbers of teaching staff on board and help them change their roles in the direction of increased tutorial work and, possibly, design of learning packages.
- Whether colleges attempting to bring about major change through learning centres, in the current much more stringent economic climate, will be able to sustain adequate library resources alongside the burgeoning IT resource requirements of the new centres must be a matter of doubt.
- Alternatively, is there a need for more decentralised resources supported by networking with a streamlined library to drive the operation?
- An even larger question is whether the whole approach envisaged by those 'playing the numbers game' might constitute a blind alley. As Gray and Warrender[3] point out in their report to the Further Education Funding Council:

College managers measure outcomes in terms of management efficiency and effectiveness. Thus they referred to their capacity to meet internal and external requirements and to productivity improvements (student taught hours, retention rates, utilisation ratios).

However, colleges did not have the tools to identify whether resource-based learning itself was intrinsically more effective than other forms of teaching and learning. *[p.18]*

Model E: Skills-driven interventions

You won't solve institutional problems of poorly structured courses and poor focus on learning by merely putting in ad hoc support for individual students – *Learning resources manager*

The mission

Implicit in this approach is recognition that librarians cannot simply go on dealing with more and more individual student problems as numbers increase and additional pressures are created by the extended range of information available and the shift towards flexible learning.

Librarians in education have traditionally taken an interest in students' 'library skills'. The approach outlined here depends upon recognition by the college of the importance of systematic information skills development as part of student support strategy, and of INSET in this area for college staff. It relies on the librarian's ability to adopt and sustain a proactive role. This, in turn, requires librarians to develop their expertise by assimilating some elements of learning theory, notably the experiential learning cycle[18] and ideas about preferred learning styles,[19] to enable them to work more effectively with groups of students.

Note that librarian-initiated intervention is not the only option for successful information skills development. One college visited has an extensive learning development unit dedicated to encouraging full implementation of the college's tutorial policy and take-up of resource-based learning, emphasising collaborative information skills work.

Location and staffing

This work will be initiated in classrooms unless library facilities include teaching rooms. Since most effective information skills development is subject-based, rather than a free-standing element of courses, success will require collaboration between teachers and librarians in planning, delivering, assessing and evaluating assignments and course elements.

The teaching role for librarians will necessarily be complemented by continuing work in the library. As a sixth form college librarian noted:

> *If we are doing our work properly we should be assuming a proactive teaching role within the library/learning resources area.*

Core activities

There are two basic approaches to skills-focused intervention by librarians. A few colleges take a programme-based approach, on the lines of the Hackney College initiative, to enhance delivery of information skills to Access students (described by Atkinson and Scott[20]).

At one of our seminars, Judy Atkinson summarised the main features of the Hackney approach to supporting learning and teaching through the library section of the learning resource service as follows:

- contributing to the planning process, by means of environmental scanning (mainly through their Curriculum and Staff Development Library), curriculum planning (through membership of course teams), and greater curriculum flexibility (through a steering group chaired by the Learning Resources Manager)
- support to teaching and learning delivery, through attractive learning environments, structured and accredited information skills training, and improved access (by networking the college and other means)
- demonstrating the support they provide to curriculum processes, through the quality assurance system (in which quantitative and qualitative performance indicators are set clearly within the context of teaching and learning).

(Our bracketed comments, based on the presentation notes.)

In one case study college, a framework for progressive development of information skills across the curriculum was developed jointly by staff of the library, learning centre, communications and IT departments,

working with lecturers. It took the form of an element of the college core skills development programme, facilitated by an allocation of teaching hours. The programme will eventually cover:

> *planning research; locating and gathering information; selecting and appraising; organising and recording; communication and presentation; evaluation-linked to GNVQ grading.*

Elsewhere, the main thrust of this approach is through subject-specialist librarians working with teaching staff. There appears to be a mini-trend towards faculty librarians, learning support staff or 'education technicians' with a resource-based skills development brief. The strengths of the approach are described by a senior curriculum manager:

> *In developing student research and communication skills, modules are offered collaboratively by teaching and library staff ... All these students receive library research skills and study skills sessions delivered by the librarians with teaching staff, supported by a tutoring assignment set by the teachers. The programme involves the librarian in guiding students to and through materials and teachers in assignment setting and support, with joint assessing. We are now designing a more advanced course at level two of the programme prior to the dissertation in level three ... The real value comes when this is part and parcel of the subject expertise of the course. We have seen a very positive move towards 'tutor librarians' who have sympathy with the subject area and a cutting edge knowledge of library facilities, including CD-ROM and knowledge of research skills ...*
>
> *The librarians are involved in course planning and course review includes formal reference to library use. It is clear that they are coming from the library angle in a positive way: making reference to what's available and how this can be built up. This is very important when we are bouncing round ideas about particular modules.*

Unfortunately librarians' involvement in research and study skills at this college is confined to HE because 'if we extend the amount of tutorial work to FE it will wear staff out'.

However, at another college, the focus is on new FE entrants because 'we lose most of our students in the first ten weeks'. Here, academic members of staff, now recast as 'learning development advisors', work with faculty librarians and teaching staff nominated as 'resource-based learning co-ordinators' on various initiatives. Two of these are for BTEC national pilots on 'Effective use of learning resources' and 'Career and study directions' – modules training students to be effective users of learning resources during their first ten weeks at college. The modules are self-directed, with minimal teaching, leading to compilation of a portfolio of evidence, plus 'a strong input on IT to make it more sexy'.

Use of facilities

Effective problem-solving skills work leads to more efficient use of library facilities by students. Emphasis is on skills associated with planning a task or assignment, gathering information from a variety of resources systematically, applying relevant criteria for selection or rejection, and organising and presenting the selected information. The result should be more purposeful and systematic library activity: students are less likely to rush into a task without first considering what information is likely to be useful and where it can be found.

In the medium term, emphasis on skills development is likely to lead to increased requests for the full range of library facilities, greater demand for current information in a variety of forms, and for inter-library loans.

Curriculum interventions

Since increased librarian involvement in library and study skills development requires greater direct involvement in teaching and learning, all of this work can reasonably be described as curriculum

intervention. To sustain it, the college will need to credit teaching hours to the librarians involved, reassign library posts to teaching salary scales where appropriate, and tackle the difficulty of finding teaching hours for this work when overall taught hours are being reduced.

Key factors

This approach makes demands upon college and staff in various ways:

- Librarians are asked to acquire and apply teaching skills, and require support, time to get involved and recognition for their contribution.
- Teachers are asked to accept librarians as teaching colleagues offering specific skills and knowledge. They must also surrender some responsibility for student learning to students and shift their role from teaching towards learning support.
- College managers are asked to:
  - recognise the full significance of student empowerment through problem-solving skills development
  - create the conditions in the college and the flexibility in curriculum delivery to allow this to happen
  - find ways to encourage and reward this work.

Implications of these models

The common denominator in most colleges is that they are now faced with increased demands for a wider variety of courses, often for greater numbers of students – to be delivered without a commensurate increase in resources and often with reduced budgets and teaching hours.

In response, college senior management teams have been forced to re-assess systematically the issues surrounding curriculum resourcing and support. However, this general response has not resulted in uniform consolidation or retrenchment; instead colleges have redeployed overall

resources in different ways, reflecting the college's history, experience and ethos. It follows that effectiveness in supporting teaching and learning should be seen as context specific. Each approach to curriculum resourcing reveals different strengths and weaknesses and is likely to result in different elements of success and failure.

Other approaches than those described above could, of course, be adopted. The approach outlined in figure 1 focuses on possible roles of the librarian. What becomes apparent in explaining librarian involvement through the models or the 'hierarchy' of librarian interventions presented in the figure, is that in the current context, where college managers are looking at systematic and far-reaching decisions about curriculum support, librarians cannot afford to defend a position they have arrived at by accident. All of the strategies described here are defensible, but it is important to be able to demonstrate to external inspectors or internal senior managers and governors, what is being attempted, how, and why.

A central question raised by senior management interventions, such as the rapid creation of learning centres, is whether management definitions of success (usually couched in terms of productivity improvements, emphasising taught hours, retention rates and utilisation ratios)[3] are compatible with library goals (which emphasise satisfying individual students, extending the range of and access to available resources, and fostering students' repertoire of problem-solving skills).

Is success in developing libraries and learning resources wholly dependent upon responding to current senior management priorities? The recent Touche Ross report[2] on value for money in allocating learning resources in higher education (including provision in FE colleges) concludes:

> *Our view here is that Learning Resources is [sic] more likely to deliver an efficient and effective service if there is congruence between the corporate and LR planning processes. In this respect, we recommend that LR Departments adopt a service level description or service standards setting out what they are planning to achieve.*

Figure 1: The roles of the librarian: some choices

Librarian roles	Independent work	Co-operation	Collaboration
Teacher	provide induction to library deliver one-off skills lessons give support for individual students	deliver course-related information skills programmes provide IT workshops for teaching staff	engage in team teaching on modules in or out of library help assess students' work
Advisor	suggest resources needed or available for a course	give feedback to teachers on student problems with assignments	contribute to the debate on learning with resources, student problems with resources, strategies for coping providing information management input to SMT
Curriculum developer	plan workshops in the library for staff or students offer resource support for new courses	co-operate with teachers over planning assignments plan course-related information skills modules (accredited)	engage in course design and assessment contribute to course review and evaluation
Materials designer	produce library/skills worksheets or software	co-operate with technical staff (eg, feasibility studies)	develop front-end of IT packages create flexible materials/ independent learning modules
Information resource manager	acquire and manage library resources and other central learning resources ensuring adequate access to these resources	acquire materials on behalf of departments/curriculum centres discuss acquisitions and purchasing priorities deploy library resources to meet specific course requirements	allocate library budgets to departments work with departments/curriculum centres to enhance college resources (eg, IT networks)

Take strategic management responsibility for college IT systems to support teaching and learning

Chapter 5

Some issues and proposals

Never mind the quality; feel the width.

– Tailor's exhortation (apocryphal)

Managing meltdown

The previous chapter noted the potential tension between management priorities producing pressure towards course design focused on workplace competences, and the broader educational aspiration enshrined in the concept of the library. In a few colleges, the choices appear even more stark, amounting almost to an assumption that the library space could be better used for student word processing.

The tension is likely to become ever more extreme in some colleges because of the accelerating pace of change. For example, less than two years ago many colleges based their planning on the assumption that there would continue to be some limited financial growth in the sector. Their plans have had to be drastically revised. According to a survey[21] conducted by FEDA in July 1996, 119 UK colleges were involved in projects using 'telematics' (the favoured Euro-term) applied to the curriculum and more than 100 had access to the Internet. FEDA has since launched the Quality in Information and Learning Technology (QUILT)

programme, entailing IT staff development for more than 50,000 college staff in England and Wales.

The developments reviewed in this report and their impact as discerned by participants in the research project give rise to a number of key questions, some overlapping, which are discussed below.

When resources are limited and shrinking, how can they be deployed most effectively to underpin the learning process?

College libraries are not sacrosanct. Our survey evidence indicates that:

- several colleges have been actively re-thinking how central resources are used to support teaching and learning for some years
- many more are responding to current pressures by changing the way they deliver parts of the curriculum
- at least a few libraries are in real danger of being totally by-passed in the process.

The issue for many colleges is how to deploy staff effectively to support learning when the overall staff cost per student must shrink substantially. So far, a great deal of faith has been placed in a limited form of resource-based learning and 'independent supported study', with no real evidence of the efficacy of this approach, and usually no substantial commitment of INSET resources to help teachers move to a new learning support role.

The next phase of the debate may well focus on the variety of ways in which libraries can support students as learners, centred on this group of relatively inexpensive staff, who know about information sources and selection, and understand the need to foster problem-solving skills to enable students to function independently. It seems likely that the repertoire of library interventions and involvement in team-working will extend, and the organisation of resources to support this work will change. There may well be a confluence of the learning support roles of teachers and librarians towards an eventual redefinition of tasks, in

which teachers deal with one-off student problems in finding and using information, freeing librarians for greater collaboration with the teachers. Such a scenario raises new questions, some of which are looked at below.

Is resource-based learning concerned with resources or learning?

In his book on open and distance learning, Derek Rowntree[22] drew a careful distinction between open learning, which he described as a philosophy, and distance learning, which he characterised as a technology. A problem in considering resource-based learning in colleges is the recent tendency to think of this important learning approach as another technology.

We earlier drew attention to the variety of provision in learning support centres to meet different needs, an important element in colleges where they were introduced some time ago. More recent tendencies have been to recast the library as a learning support centre, without taking full account of the effects on 'normal' library use; and to invest in large, minimally resourced and staffed rooms to house maximum numbers of students, but providing a doubtful level of real learning support.

There has also been a tendency to rely primarily on learning packages in these centres. How should these materials be evaluated and updated? Do librarians have a role here? Or will only the 'better' packages pass the test of time and continue to be used?

Several of the colleges visited are interested in reaching out to a wider clientele beyond the college, some to other parts of the country and abroad. It is important here that resource-based learning is viewed not as one limited model, but as a range of possibilities for flexible learning, whether the students are librarians overseas (communicating by fax) or prison inmates with severely limited access to other learning materials.

Questions about the relative roles of librarians, IT staff and learning support (teaching) staff appear to have been resolved in colleges that were 'in the game early', but these questions and the INSET implications, now urgently need to be addressed in colleges driven to

resource-based learning primarily to reduce operating costs. As one senior curriculum manager expressed it:

> *New approaches are staff intensive, we have to accept that. Anything other than lecturing requires a great deal of thought and time.*

The tendency to neglect the learning process in favour of the products (or the area holding them) is a danger recognised in colleges with significant experience of resource-based learning. Describing what Bolton Institute of Higher Education learned in this area, David Rudd[23] wrote:

> *We would argue that bringing together all the resources at students' finger-tips actually disempowers their independent learning ability. . . In most real-life situations they are unlikely to find information organised around their particular problem – hence one can effectively undermine their information finding skills. Accordingly, we see RBL as less to do with the resources per se (a necessary but not sufficient basis) than with the accessibility, knowledge, skills and confidence to utilise resources.*

Work is needed on the right mix of staff from different disciplines, their job descriptions and resource requirements, as well as skills training and ongoing support needed to deliver effective resource-based learning.

Graham Gibbs and his colleagues[24] have listed some factors that in their view render the adoption of resource-based learning ineffective:

1. Concentration on materials production rather than on course design and delivery.
2. Failure to provide an enabling infrastructure for good course design and delivery.
3. Excessive centralisation of organisation, projects and expertise.
4. Separation of RBL from everyday reality of course delivery.
5. Over-rigid central specification and control of the model of course design, materials design or course organisation.
6. Failure to allow for local initiatives matched to local contexts.

7. Inadequate funding (or allowance of time) for lecturers to bring about changes.
8. Unrealistic time scale for change.
9. Failure to recognise the interlocking of support mechanisms and the ability of some to block otherwise impressive advances, such as: space for learning; incentives for change; understanding of course costings; course approval and review; materials production; library and learning support facilities; information technology policy and operation; administration and management information systems; induction and training of students as independent learners; training and support of staff; frameworks for evaluation; co-ordination of course planning; funding for development and change.

What will be the respective roles of librarians, lecturers and learning support staff within FE colleges in future?

FE colleges are not alone in seeing the roles of their librarians redefined. Fowell and Levy[25] suggested a new professional practice, based on a model of networked learner support in higher education.

> *In addition to increasing awareness of electronic resources and developing the information and communication skills associated with them, the process of professional development should also include the opportunity for staff to gain:*
>
> - *understanding of the curriculum/materials design issues associated with networked training;*
> - *experiential understanding of communication, teaching and learning in the electronic environment;*
> - *awareness of different concepts of, and service provision for, learner support across the whole professional community (including networked approaches), and the opportunity for staff*

continuously to learn from the experience of others, exchange ideas, and identify good practice;

- *awareness of technological developments and of the ways in which technologies may be used to develop improved, and different services;*

- *a clear picture of local institutional policy and strategies regarding teaching, learning, research and technology, and of developments in 'grassroots' approaches to curriculum delivery.*

It may be useful to confirm that the profession referred to is librarianship (or the 'information intermediary'), but it would be equally possible to arrive at these priorities from a starting point in college lecturing.

Of course, electronic networked learning (at least in this developed form) is not the only option for the future in colleges. However, any learner-focused approach to the curriculum inevitably raises questions about how students are supported in learning, and the specific skills required. Resource-based learning calls for people to be available who are knowledgeable about the learning process, the software being used, subject content issues, and the learning packages and how to use them.

This redefinition of roles is reflected in job advertisements for variously-titled learning facilitator posts offering career development opportunities for library staff who want to move in that direction. However, the extent to which such jobs are seen as attractive may depend upon how broad a view is taken of resource-based learning within the college.

It is also worth considering whether an advance into the curriculum is appropriate for librarians in a period of retrenchment and consolidation following the 'boom years' after incorporation. There is a danger that traditional librarianship skills may be undervalued in a changing world. But there is a case for claiming that the librarian's custodial and organisational skills (especially allied to effective interpersonal skills and willingness to help individual students) are now sometimes more important than the ability to support learning in its more esoteric forms.

At worst, it seems possible that lecturers will manage students' learning processes, but with less (expensive) contact time; that a few teaching posts will be reallocated as learning support posts to help bridge the growing gap between taught hours and student numbers; and that fewer librarians will be available to acquire and manage diminished resources. At best, a collaborative approach among these groups, fostered by judicious use of INSET time, may lead to new ways of working.

How serious are colleges about information and study skills development?

Librarians report limited success in induction or study-skills programme attempts to introduce specific skills in areas such as use of the OPAC ('Loads of them forget'), or to develop skills through practice ('They were expected to make notes of their research strategy and resources tried – it didn't work because too many handouts were provided'). There are also difficulties in pitching presentations at the right level 'because students have such varied backgrounds and library experience'.

At least some of these difficulties can be attributed to inappropriate teaching methods for specific skills acquisition. The tendency was well illustrated in Atkinson and Scott's account[20] of remodelling information skills work with students, using the principles of experiential learning:

> *Prior to re-evaluation of our methods we had prioritised the need for practice in subject searching to the exclusion of acknowledging the students' individual starting points... We had now moved from a position where we had been setting a series of practice exercises with little introduction of the skills to a situation where we created a structured learning opportunity with ourselves as facilitators or trainers. This concentrated on developing skills by application of a search strategy – a logical plan emphasising the choices available to the student at each stage.*
>
> *We found the application of these methods acknowledged and validated the prior experience of our students. We were able to design a*

programme which enabled students to identify and choose methods of locating materials and to go on to evaluate those methods for themselves. This approach involves the students, who genuinely learn by doing. Explanations are provided by peers not just trainers, providing more opportunity for reinforcement of understanding.

If education librarians are to work effectively with groups of students to help them acquire and develop study and library skills (or IT skills), it is important that they are given opportunities to develop group facilitation and assessment skills, underpinned by relevant learning theory. The need for professional development in this area is not confined to the FE sector, as the current professional development programme for health care librarians, 'Librarian of the 21st Century', amply illustrates.[26]

Larger questions are whether systematic information skills development is a priority for the college, and whether the ways in which colleges currently function offer any real opportunity for systematic work in this area. There is a dangerous tendency (echoed to an extent in the Higginson report[27]) to take too easy comfort from students' apparent ability to cope with the immediate demands of information technology and to underestimate the skills demands made upon students when pushing them towards resource-based learning. One senior curriculum manager judges that most students are better at obtaining information from various sources, but that this only emphasised their shortcomings in reviewing, selecting and synthesising information, and presenting the results.

Systematic information skills development will require allocation of money and space, collaboration between teachers, librarians and other learning support staff, substantial amounts of time, and INSET focused on effective problem-solving skills development. Is it realistic to expect colleges to make this investment to underwrite resource-based learning?

How important is training to induce change?

One interpretation of the changes in colleges brought about by increased student numbers and decreased taught hours, is that lecturers will move

towards a new learning support role something like that of librarians in one-to-one dealings with students. This scenario suggests that librarians will eventually move away from their current strong focus on students to a role that complements that of the learning support staff by helping to plan and resource their work.

Precursors of this 'new order' are found in the increasing number of colleges creating learner support posts in open learning centres, a parallel development alongside traditional teaching and librarianship roles. The dilemma here is that while the attractions are obvious to senior managers, there are massive professional development implications in moving towards a different approach to teaching and learning:

> *Colleges have neither the resources nor the internal capabilities to tackle all of these issues, which provide, therefore, an obvious focus for a national initiative* *Gray and Warrender[3] [p. 27]*

The Learning and Technology (Higginson) Committee[27] set up by the English FEFC was unequivocal in responding to this issue. It recommended creating a national staff development programme, available to every college, focused on:

> *the skills required by teaching and other staff in accessing information and learning technologies and applying them effectively to teaching, learning and student support*

and a 'training the trainers' programme to enable delivery in colleges. Unfortunately, although 'information and learning technologies' could be interpreted as embracing print materials, it is unlikely to lead to more concerted work on information problem-solving skills development.

Our evidence suggests that staff development in relation to the new learning requirements can be a long and uphill struggle. One college visited has a Learning Development Unit (an outgrowth of the Flexible Learning Unit) dedicated to promoting new learning processes, which are seen as 'more than just staff training in new methods of teaching and

learning'. The programme is based on changing the assessment that 'students are independent but are not equipped to learn independently'.

This unit focuses on effective tutoring, implementing the college tutorial policy, introducing resource-based learning and persuading staff to consider resource-based learning materials. The unit manager concludes:

> *It does take time. We keep trying different strategies. We are moving towards an integrated learning resource centre and are conducting internal INSET to move this along; 20% of each module will be delivered via the learning centre within the next eighteen months; and there is self-directed staff development in some Faculties. Tutorial support, in particular, is an uphill struggle, although we see it as a replacement for the loss of interaction resulting from reduced taught hours. We've tried everything to make the tutorial policy work.*

The senior curriculum manager adds:

> *It's no good having integrated resource delivery if the staff can't use it. We need an information development strategy for the college, not an IT strategy. . . I don't think Higginson helps much.*

Although many colleges permit or encourage librarians to participate in training events, few have a staff development strategy in place for them. A few colleges appear willing to invest substantially in educating and training librarians, as a potential source of revenue. Somerset College of Arts and Technology set up the first accredited centre for NVQs in the library and information sector (described by Pickles and Totterdell[28]).

The pressing question of the moment is whether colleges can afford to invest in the staff development time needed to ensure that initiatives aimed at changing the balance between teaching and learning can work.

Is convergence necessary to the effective use of library resources?

The three views encountered on this question can be summarised as 'separate but complementary', 'inter-dependent', and 'convergent'.

A trend is apparently developing for the full range of central resources for students to be grouped together, encompassing the library, learning centres, IT open access centres, and other support services such as binding and reprographics. Such moves can be supported on efficiency grounds, because of economies of scale or staffing efficiencies (enabling centres to be staffed for longer hours). They can also be seen to present a coherent range of services to students carrying out their assignments.

However, the integrated approach only works efficiently if real integration is achieved through teamwork, to the point where there is no longer demarcation between acquiring resources and responding to students. This is likely to require INSET around service provision to ensure that, for instance, IT staff 'think service' when dealing with students (being able, for example, to explain the cataloguing system), and library staff respond confidently to computer problems, especially if called upon to supervise IT use in the evenings or at weekends.

Our seminars for librarians both advanced the view that development should focus on inter-disciplinary teams. It was argued that colleges need to develop their views about how the 'new' teaching and learning will work and about the sorts of teams needed to support this. It will be management's responsibility to create the conditions to make it work, including timetabling, resourcing and conditions of service.

Although one of our models is based upon 'equal co-existence', it is questionable whether many colleges will continue to fund separately various resource services as budget decisions become increasingly stringent and resource demands escalate.

As to how convergence should be managed, Allen Armsby,[29] Director of Learning Resources at Newcastle College, offered ten operational principles to govern service convergence, shown in edited form below:

- the service has to work exclusively for the benefit of the students and all college staff
- the whole service will have shared aims and objectives

- students and college staff must be free to move between all sections of the service and find, as standard, the same level of support, quality of service and personal treatment
- staff may be deployed throughout the service
- within the service, all equipment, software and materials will be shared internally for the mutual benefit of the whole service for those who use it
- staff at any service point will direct enquirers to that part of the service which can assist them best
- all finances received from the college by the service will be common property within the service
- all facilities must be freely available to staff and students, or offered at cost price
- all learning resource staff will have avenues of communication to the management of the service
- the highest standard of quality of service achievable will prevail, consistent with financial resources available, and reflect the college's own definition of quality.

Is full commitment to learning support realistic for colleges? Our research confirms that truly integrated learning support through combinations of learning centres, IT centres, libraries and support services requires heavy attention to:

- tutorial support by subject teachers
- study support by teachers, librarians or learning centre staff, including use of 'learning to learn' materials
- technical IT support by IT staff
- guidance on IT use by teachers, librarians or learning centre staff
- assessment of prior learning

- assessment of reading and numeracy and additional support by specialist staff as required
- counselling to ensure that students get the right sorts of programme to meet their learning needs
- access to a wide range of resources, including current information
- appropriate and differentiated space in which the various support functions can work together
- appropriate facilities

Some colleges, substantially involved in flexible learning for some time, have taken major steps to meet these requirements. It is questionable whether 'the complete package' can be achieved if the move to resource-based learning is rapid, piecemeal and driven by financial rationing.

How important is physical space for library effectiveness?

Arguably, developments in college information technology networking will significantly reduce pressure on space by creating a 'virtual library', accessible throughout the college. In this view, librarians' effectiveness depends on their ability to provide 'networked learner support'.[25]

In another version of their future role, librarians work alongside teachers in the classroom, planning assignments and designing course materials away from the library.

The contrary view is that library space will become increasingly important as the range of demands on library services extends. The availability and suitable use of space appears to affect the librarian's ability to deliver effective services. A heavily over-crowded library, which evoked comments about shoehorns from two users during the visit, greatly inhibited any scope for library-based group work. In contrast, a larger library area – clearly not designed for its new role of learning support centre – resulted in more librarian-time tied up in supervising student use of facilities, rather than curriculum support.

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Differential use of library space ('zoning') is recognised as helping to overcome the conflicting requirements of computer use, group work and quiet study. The difficulty is that large spaces suitable for zoning may not be available. Increasing competition for such space from learning support and IT centres is likely. This may prompt colleges to move towards convergence without properly considering its managerial implications.

What should be the focus of performance indicators and targets for the library?

Substantial amounts of time and effort are taken up in most libraries with practical tasks of obtaining, processing, displaying and exploiting a range of books and other materials. It is hardly surprising that performance indicators often target these areas. Rather more surprising is that so little attention has apparently been given to choosing performance indicators, setting targets and collecting data in relation to library support for teaching and learning. For example, the brief section on performance indicators in the otherwise admirable COFHE *Guidelines for College Librarians*[30] confines its consideration to 'traditional' aspects of library performance measurement. The Scottish Library and Information Service Council *Standards . . .*[31] have a similar limitation.

Developing performance indicators and targets that shed real light on how the library interacts with the college curriculum and its delivery is an essential step for any college taking this aspect of its support for teaching and learning seriously. Since effectiveness in this context is situation specific, a uniform set of indicators for all colleges is unlikely to be the answer. However, it should be possible, for example, to generate appropriate indicators and targets for colleges applying versions of the five models described in Chapter 4.

Our final two questions may be misinterpreted as undermining what is currently being worked for and achieved by college librarians, but should, we feel, be posed at this point.

Is it necessary for the librarian/learning resource manager to be part of the college curriculum management machinery?

One vice-principal believes that curriculum committees are a last resort when all other liaison and networking fails. Several librarians stress the importance of informal contact with teaching colleagues. Given the time and effort taken up with lobbying for representation on committees, attending meetings and dealing with associated paperwork, it should perhaps be asked whether this energy could be better spent elsewhere.

Is it time to batten down the hatches?

After a few years of financial growth, the FE sector now faces a period of retrenchment and hard work to sustain advances already made. In this climate, is it appropriate for college librarians to seek greater involvement in aspects of college teaching and learning, or would it be better to concentrate on holding things together?

What next?

We have reported on some of the factors affecting library involvement in curriculum matters, outlined five models (with variations) of active college library support for teaching and learning, as well as a model of levels of intervention by the librarian, and we have posed a number of questions about the current scene.

In our view, it is important to examine all of the models in practice and assess their relative effectiveness and practical consequences. Such an examination must compare the costs and apparent benefits of each approach, in college management as well as curriculum development and library development terms. This will necessitate developing and applying a range of relevant performance indicators and targets.

Further work is needed, involving college senior managers as well as college librarians/learning resources managers, to inform college

decisions about the ways forward at each stage in the process. The outcomes from such work should include:

- clarification of the main issues in using the library/LRC to support teaching and learning in the college
- opportunities for college curriculum managers and librarians to respond to and shape the emerging ideas
- formulation of specific guidance about effective intervention in this area and the circumstances likely to bring this about
- generation of performance indicators and targets focused on library support for teaching and learning in the college.

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Acronyms used in this report

BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CLAIT	Computer literacy and information technology
COFHE	Colleges of Further and Higher Education Groups of the Library Association
COLRIC	Council for Learning Resources in Colleges
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
fte	full-time equivalent [student]
IIP	Investors in People
INSET	Inservice Training
NATFHE:	National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
NCET	National Council for Educational Technology
OPAC	On-line Public Access Catalogue
PI	performance indicators
QUILT	Quality in Information and Learning Technology
RSA	Royal Society of Arts for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce

Appendix 1:

The questionnaire

College Library support for Teaching and Learning

[The following sets out in full the questions asked of participants in the project survey; however, we have condensed its original layout. Ed.]

SECTION A: The libraries or learning resource centres

1 Is your central resource area described as a:
library learning resource centre other designation *(please specify)*

2 How many staff work for the library service/LRC?
Full-time *Part-time* *Total FTEs*
Chartered Librarians
Other staff occupying professional posts
Secretarial and support staff

3 Please indicate the opening hours of the main library:
Term-time *Holidays*

4a How many students were on the college roll in September 1995?
FE Students (Full-time equivalent)
HE Students (FTEs)

4b How many students were on the college roll in September 1990?
FE Students (Full-time equivalent)
HE Students (FTEs)

4c How many teaching staff (FTEs) does the college currently employ?

5 What is the current total annual library/LRC budget, excluding staff costs?

SECTION B: Curriculum planning, delivery, evaluation

6 How frequently are library/LRC staff involved in:
i) induction sessions for new students
ii) informal individual guidance to students
iii) discussing materials for courses with lecturers

iv) preparing and supervising library assignments aimed at helping students find their way round the library
v) induction linked to course requirements (eg sessions on library research at beginning of an assignment)
vi) preparing materials for assignments or courses devised by lecturers (eg reading lists)
vii) joint planning of assignments or courses with lecturers
viii) joint delivery of assignments with lecturers
ix) joint monitoring and evaluation of assignments with lecturers
x) delivering information study/library/learning skills programmes
xi) assessment of students or course elements
xii) review of courses
Are these interventions usually:
very frequently regularly occasionally never ad hoc planned

6.1 Which, if any, of the activities listed above, have significantly increased in importance over the past three years *(please list the numbers)*:

6.2 Which, if any, of the activities listed above, have significantly decreased in importance over the past three years *(please list the numbers)*:

6.3. Are the more substantial forms of involvement usually focused on particular course teams? *No Yes*

6.3.1 Which courses and what main kinds of involvement?

6.4 Are librarians members of any course teams? Which teams?

6.5 Are other LRC staff (eg IT Manager) members of any course teams? Which teams?

6.6 Is there librarian or other LRC staff membership of the curriculum boards/boards of studies (or equivalent) in particular curriculum areas?
No Yes Which curriculum areas and which categories of staff?

7 Does the senior management of the college actively encourage librarian involvement in the curriculum?
No Yes How?

7.1 Does the person responsible for the library/LRC have the opportunity to comment on the resource implications of new course proposals?
Always Usually Sometimes Never

7.2 If so, does this make any actual difference to the size of the library/LRC budget?

8.1 Is the person responsible for the library/LRC a member of the academic board, college curriculum planning committee or equivalent college-wide body/ bodies? *No* *Yes*

SECTION C: Supporting teaching and learning

9 Have the following developments led to significant changes in the level of library use? *Much more* *More* *No real change* *Less* *Much less*

i) GNVQs
ii) NVQs
iii) Open/flexible learning
iv) IT Support Units
v) Assessment of Prior Learning
vi) More returners/mature students
vii) Adult education students
viii) Distance learning
ix) HE franchising
x) Decrease in the number of formal (teaching) contact hours

9.1 Which of these developments are having the most impact on the library?

SECTION D: Other issues

10 To what extent have the following changes affected library/LRC resourcing or the contribution of the library/LRC to teaching and learning? Please make comments in all boxes that are relevant to your college/library below.
Library/LRC resourcing *Library/LRC contribution to teaching and learning*

10.1 Convergence of services. Please indicate which services:

10.2 or non-convergence of services.

10.3 Enhanced availability of information technology in the library/LRC for library users

10.4 Enhanced availability of information technology elsewhere in the college

10.5 More part-time students

10.6 Performance indicators and targets

10.7 Specialist library posts for student support/info. skills development. Please give titles of posts:

10.8 Service-level agreements

10.9 Inclusion in college strategic plan

10.10 Investors in people pilot project

10.11 Professional support for teachers through staff libraries and collections of teaching materials

10.12 Involvement of librarians and other LRC staff in college staff development

10.13 Systematic self-assessment

11 Has the overall performance of the library/LRC improved or declined in the past year; three years; five years? (If you have not been in post long enough to judge, what is the consensus amongst your longer serving library/LRC senior colleagues?)

	Over past year	*Compared with three years ago*	*Compared with five years ago*
Improved			
Steady state			
Fluctuated			
Declined			

Please complete all three columns

Why is this?

12 Is your library/LRC service attempting to enhance the role of its professional staff in supporting teaching and learning through specific skills training (eg teaching skills; IT skills), or other means?

No *Yes* *Please outline how:*

12.1 What qualifications are being sought by these members of staff, if any?

12.2 Is your library/LRC service attempting to enhance the role of its support staff in supporting teaching and learning? If so, how?

13 Finally, what are the two most important features of the library/LRC support for teaching and learning?

What are the two main impediments to your contribution?

Name of respondent: Post held:

Appendix 2:

The case study and source colleges for descriptions of other initiatives

Bilston Community College

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies

Blackburn College

Bournemouth and Poole College of Art and Design

Doncaster College

The Hackney Community College

Havering Sixth Form College

Lewisham College

NESCOT

Newcastle College

Richard Huish Sixth Form College

The Sheffield College

Somerset College of Arts and Technology

Appendix 3:

Interview question areas

Library Staff

1. Strategy around supporting teaching and learning
2. Curriculum intervention
   examples – problems – successes – how can they tell?
   relevant nos. (ie, extent of involvement)
3. Curriculum machinery
   what kinds of contributions?
   which have most impact?
4. Professional development
   supporting their curriculum interventions
5. Role changes?
6. Learning Resource Centre? (What does it mean to you?)
7. If you were taking over a new library tomorrow, what would you focus on to ensure that the library was making a real impact in supporting teaching and learning?

Senior Curriculum Managers

1. Does the library/LRC make a real contribution to supporting teaching and learning in your college?
2. In what ways?
3. Changes in the college at the curriculum end in past two–three years?
4. Have these changes significantly affected the learning experiences of the college students?
5. Have these changes affected the way in which the library/LRC operates?
   - Resources
   - Opening hours
   - Staff roles etc.
6. Developments in educational uses of IT?
7. How will any such developments relate to future library development?
8. How important is your library in supporting teaching and learning in the college?

9. If you were setting up your library/LRC from scratch what are the main elements that you would want to ensure were put in place to make it really effective?

Lecturers

1. Main changes in your courses over past two–three years?
2. How do you think that these changes have affected your students?
   (eg teaching methods, contact hours, work experience, assessment)
3. Have these changes rubbed off onto the library?
4. How is the library responding?
5. Do you think that IT is going to have much impact on how you teach in the next few years?
   (Relate to library?)
6. One reason you were chosen was because you make active use of the library and its resources. Can you tell us how the library supports your work as a teacher?
   (Frequency, who, nature of collaboration, planning, assessment, course review)
7. If library disappeared, would it make any real difference to your teaching and to student progress?
8. If moved to another college tomorrow what would you really hope to find in the new college library to support you and your students?

Appendix 4

Participants at the Effective College Library seminars: February 1996

5th February 1996: Sheffield

Rachel Beckett, Barnsley College
Janet Brown, Sheffield College
Valerie Graham, Manchester College of Arts and Technology
Roger Hammersley, North Tyneside College
Ann Hardwick, Brackenhurst College
Jean Henderson, Lauder College
John Lambert, Sheffield College
Rosaline Littlefield, Joseph Priestley College
Eileen Norris, Blackpool and Fylde College
Sylvia Plews, Sheffield College
Andrew Poole, Melton Mowbray College
Rita Procter, Sheffield College
Frances Revels, Sheffield College
Maria Taylor, Sheffield College
Lynda Trushell, Sheffield College
Gill Wignall, John Leggott Sixth Form College
Pat Willimott, Barnsley College

13th February 1996: London

Liz Annetts, Uxbridge College
Judy Atkinson, Hackney Community College
Pat Barclay, Lewisham College
Stephen Bowman, Crawley College
Jo Bruce, Northbrook College
Judith Cuninghame, Carshalton College
Krishna Datta, City and Islington College
Susannah Everington, Kingston Maurward College
Hazel Fkwirzynska, Tile Hill College
Lyn Flanagan, Thanet College
Wendy Forrest, Lewisham College
Linda Foster, Kingston College
Anne Goldsworthy, Worthing Sixth Form College
Sheila James, Hackney Community College
Hannah Kent, Hillcroft College
Iris Lewis, Barking College
Patrick Lyons, Uxbridge College
Kay Lunt, Mid Cheshire College
Karen Moorhouse, Epping Forest College
Meg Newman, Fareham College
Paul North, South Kent College
Diane Smith, Braintree College
Pauline Sowry, St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College
Jane Stauch, Richmond-upon-Thames College
Sarah Sutton, Leicester South Fields College
Jane Tether, City and Islington College
Gaynor Thomas, Trowbridge College
Chloe Watkins, Lambeth College
Judith Wells, Portsmouth College

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